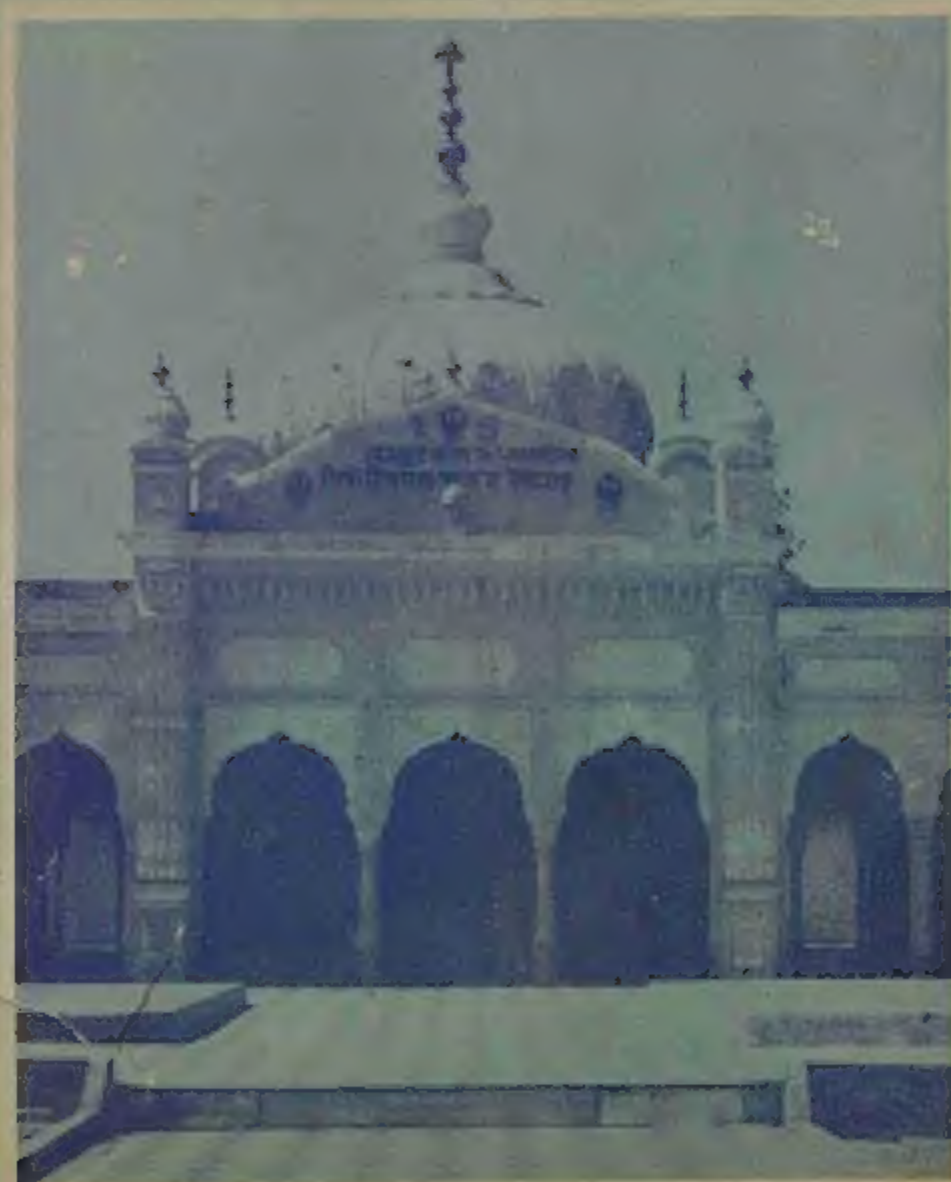


# The Spokesman Weekly

NEW DELHI

GURU NANAK NUMBER, 1992

PRICE : Rs 4/-



*There is one Supreme God.  
By whom all men are made.  
Nay, the whole Universe is made of Him  
Then none is good and none is bad.*

— GURU NANAK



*A view of the Gurdwara Panja Sahib Ludhiana, Punjab*

Let the Teachings of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Jee  
Whose 523rd Birth Anniversary we are celebrating  
Guide us in all our actions.

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New Delhi - 110 049

Vol. 41  
No. 48

The Spokesman Weekly

Price  
Rs. 4/-

## WARRING AKALIS

With their credibility at its lowest ebb and their mass following constantly getting eroded, the warring Akali factions have not become wiser or taken corrective steps to mend their fences with the people. The number of these groups continues to increase with the passage of every day; now we are saddled with at least 14 of the species. Some of them are one-man parties like the Pharaman Dal of Mahant Sewa Das who is an all-important personality only in the eyes of All India Radio and Doordarshan, Jiwan Singh Umranangal outfit and Sukhinder Singh adficee; all of them are, like the proverbial Dutch army, all generals but no soldiers. Among the new feldging Dals is that of Bhai Manjit Singh, brother of Bhai Amrik Singh and till recently president of his faction of All-India Sikh Students Federation. After hubbubbing with main Akali factions and becoming a member of the Panthic organisation of four Akali Dals and two AITSSF flocks, he chose to rise in revolt and hoist his own separate flag, not to serve the Panth but to prepare the ground for his climb to chief ministership of Punjab. In addition to 14 Akali Dals, there are now seven AITSSF's, five Panthic committees of militants, and 200 odd militant groups.

The biggest oddity is that all of them swear by the Great Gurus, vow to work for the ascendency (chardhi kala) of the Panth, and constantly shout from housetops to be working for Sikh unity. But, unfortunately, in the process, they tend to splinter further into more and more factions. No ideological differences yawn between them; only self-inflated egos, personal prejudices and vaulting ambitions stand in the way. Even the puniest among them dreams of investing either presidentship of a united party or chief ministership. Each one of them not only poses as the true warrior for Panthic causes but also brands all others as traitors and "agents of the Delhi darbar."

Their goal also remains elusive and blurred. In the initial stages, they wanted reins of power within the Indian constitution. After 1978, they stuck to Annandpur Sahib Resolution which wanted the centre to retain only four subjects of defence, external affairs, currency and communications and pass on all other subjects to the states. Nowadays, bowing to militant pressures, most of them favour Khalistan or Khalsa Raj. But they have not defined either the boundaries of the new state of their dreams or its relationship with India. In this quest, only Sardar Simranjit Singh Mann has been constant, though some of his statements divorced from realities; Sardar Prakash Singh Badal has been oscillating between more autonomy within India and an independent and sovereign state outside the Indian Union. Only the Longowal faction, with Sardar Surjit Singh Barnala as its main idologue, has been insistent on remaining within the Indian embrace. These divisions have been exploited by Congress (I) to its full advantage. Unless the Akalis sink their differences and forge unity, they shall continue to rot in political wilderness.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### SGPC Elections

Now that elections to Punjab assembly and three municipal corporations and 95 municipalities have been completed and poll for village Panchayats has been fixed for January-end next, it is high time elections to the SGPC are also held without delay; they are already overdue by eight years. The last elections to this supreme religious body of the Sikhs, often called as Sikh parliament, were held in 1979 and were due in 1984. Though the Punjab Gurdwara Act of 1925 prescribes that elections be held every five years, the rulers of independent India have been trampling this provision under their feet with impunity. Solely because bigwigs of Congress in its various incarnations, could not tolerate Akalis holding this most important organisation within their grip. Any party, which controls SGPC, is considered, and rightly too, as sovereign of Sikh hearts, as it is elected by Sikh voters alone.

Though Congress leaders are wedded, outwardly, to ecumenism, which means abstinence from religious matters, yet they have been striving their nerves to capture SGPC since 1947, if only to nibble at Akali roots among the Sikh masses. At first, they tried their tricks through Sardar Iqbal Singh Majhail and Sardar Udhham Singh Nagoke. Later, Chief Minister Prater Singh Kairon, enmeshed in his methods and strategy, formed

a Sadh Sangat Board but all its candidates lost their deposits. Then Mrs Indira Gandhi needed Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to put up 40 of his men against official Akali candidates in 1979 but had to hark just, as none of the stongers could romp home with victory. It was because of this humiliating defeat that Congress rulers have been averse to holding SGPC elections.

Present Chief Minister Beant Singh has been making conflicting statements. At times, he says that SGPC President Gurcharan Singh Tohra should himself arrange the elections. At others, he argues why the government should dabble in religious matters and arrange SGPC poll. But he needs fresh lessons in legislation. Under the 1925 Gurdwara Act, the central government has to register voters in Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Chandigarh, and then hold elections. Neither New Delhi nor Beant Singh can abdicate their duties imposed by law passed by parliament.

SGPC has 140 members elected by Sikh voters in the above four states. Another 15 are co-opted from amongst Sikhs outside Punjab and some professionals. The five high priests are ex-officio members but have no voting rights. Its authority in matters religious is acknowledged by Sikhs throughout the world.

### Innocents Mowed Down

The massacre of 25 Bihari labourers on October 20-21 night at two villages, Sadon Kalan and Debarji, of Ludhiana district deserves to be condemned in the harshest possible words. Because the victims were not only defenceless and poor people but were also there to help Sikh farmers in their agricultural work. Whether this brutal killing will scare other labourers to flee Punjab remains to be seen. If this happens, the state's economy would be jeopardised to very great extent. If the militants thought they were serving the Sikh cause, they are sadly mistaken. Some might say that this brutal murder was committed to coincide with the eighth anniversary of Mrs Indira Gandhi's assassination and, thereby, convey the message that wounds on Sikh psyche are still green. But the targets chosen were wrong; the poor men, who had come to Punjab to earn some money, had nothing to do with the wrong policies of the Delhi darbar.

No true Sikh can kill innocent and unarmed persons. The Tenth Guru, while instituting the Order

of the Khalsa, had laid down a certain code of conduct for his followers. Even on the battlefield, if the adversary's sword fell to the ground, he was to be asked to pick it up and then fight as an equal. Women and children, even of the enemy, were to be shown due respect and affection; if they are in distress, they should be extended all help and protection. Judged by these yardsticks, the militants, who claimed havoc in the two villages, have proved to be renegades from Sikh norms.

The massacre also proves that the Operation Night Dominance, launched a few months ago by Police Director-General K.P.S. Gill with so much fanfare, has either ended or has not been so much a signal success as made out to be. Because the militants struck only at night. One aftermath will be that the police will swoop on more innocent people with ferocity. But a must realise that its anti-militancy crusade will be successful only if it wins the goodwill of the Sikh masses, especially in the rural areas, and this objective cannot be achieved by just wielding the big stick.

Whether the recent atmosphere of improved security was a "lull before the storm," as predicted by Sardar Prakash Singh Badal, only the next few weeks will show. As stressed so often, the

bullet-for-bullet policy, either of the police or the militants, does not hold key to the Punjab solution; it can, in all probability, be destructive of a possible solution.

## Intolerable Burden

The Beant Singh ministry has imposed unbearable burdens on all Punjabis, especially farmers. Compared to them, the state government's gift of bonus to its employees looks like a hypocritical act of robbing the citizen Peter to pay the government servant Paul. Fifty percent hike in power and irrigation charges will harm the farmers very much. This is hitting them the belt when these hardworking men have been producing foodgrains more or less as before, despite unsettled conditions, and contribute 70 percent of the national buffer stock. They were already reeling under the body-crushing weight of rise in prices of fertilizers and other inputs. The biggest oddity is that the central government is reluctant to give the farmers remunerative prices for their produce but it is importing wheat from Canada, USA and Australia at more than double the support price given to farmers. Abolition of cess on commercial crops is of little comfort. All this amounts to killing the very goose which lays the golden egg.

An increase of 39 percent in passenger bus fares sounds ridiculous at a time when the corridors of Punjab Roadways and Punjab Road Transport Corporation are considered to be the worst in the entire country. Travel by these buses is a

veritable ordeal. Not only they are badly maintained but a lot of money also goes into the coffers of the officials because of largescale corruption.

The imposition of toll tax on non-Punjab trucks entering the state is another folly, as it will cripple industry in the state. Already very few transporters were willing to send their vehicles into Punjab. Moreover the money thus collected would go into private pockets and not government treasury.

The state is on the brink of insolvency, largely due to the obscene living of the army of ministers and the huge expenditure of Rs 270 crores on the security forces. The chief minister refuses to clamp a curfew on these two items. By allowing his band of colleagues to live like princes, he wants to keep them a good humor and, thereby ensure his following. He also refuses to pressurize the centre to announce a package of political and economic concessions which would take the wind out of the militant sails and, thus, help restore peace and normalcy in the beleaguered state. This wise act would automatically result in diminution of expenses on the police and paramilitary forces. He seems to be punishing Punjabis for voting his party to power.

## Terai Sikhs

The plight of Sikh residents of Terai region of Uttar Pradesh defies description, taught as they are between claws of two pincer movements of the power-drunk, ego-blinded and community-biased state police and the money-crazy and land-hungry mafias of the goons fully supported by the state government. The police, especially the U.P. State Constabulary, which earned notoriety as a result of wholesale massacre of Muslims in Mullaiana village of Meerut district last year, is now thriving on Sikh blood. We know how the police had gunned down a party of Sikh pilgrims last year, camouflaging their heinous crime under the plea that these men were militants from Punjab, though all of them were residents of the neighbouring villages of the scene of this cold-blooded murder. The same crime to haul up every Sikh, who has fallen foul of the police, either because of his refusal to dole out protection money or of

his pride to maintain his self-respect, has led to arrests on minor or cooked-up charges of harbouring Punjab militants or supporting them. This is a damn lie. If the militants are roaming about in the area in droves, why does not the police grab them? And why must it try to "show results" by arresting and torturing innocent Sikhs who are law-abiding citizens and have nothing to do with Punjab politics, much less militancy there.

As if this was not enough, hordes of mafia men have been threatening the Sikhs and forcing them to desert their farms, shops, and houses and move back to Punjab so that the "locals" could reclaim their previous lands. But where were these locals when the mosquito-infested marshes and tiger-crowded jungles were crying aloud to be reclaimed? It was the Sikh farmers, who, on an invitation from their state abet minister, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, went there and

converted these hostile lands into fertile fields yielding bumper crops of wheat, rice and cotton; moreover this region produces as much foodgrains as the rest of the vast state. Now to spurn these men, who contribute so much to the state's economy, is sheer ingratitude. In this nefarious design, successive state ministries have also lent their open hand, as they refused to grant proprietary rights to these hard-

working Sikhs, despite repeated promises to them and Punjab leaders.

Last week a deputation of Terai Sikhs came to Chandigarh and narrated their tales of woes to Punjab Chief Minister Beant Singh. But they were too scared to reveal their names lest they should become on return targets of police and mafia bullets. Their sole cry was, "Save us from this hellish state of affairs."

## Transporters Harassed

Sikh transporters, especially Sikh truck drivers and conductors, have become new victims of police rulum in various states. Leading the onslaught is Maharashtra, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa. Not only Sikh drivers are subjected to varied kinds of harassment, even their resting places and food stalls are being demolished. These establishments, generally known as dhabas, provide not only cheaper food as compared to other restaurants but also cots for rest and bathing facilities.

These amenities are a boon to truck drivers and conductors who can have some sleep after a tiring journey of several hundred miles at a stretch. It must be remembered that, apart from farming, transport is the main lifestyle of Sikh community throughout India. By carrying goods from one place to another they also add strength to the health of Indian economy. And any injury to them is a direct assault on this very lifeline of the people.

The plight of these Sikhs is indescribable. For example, about 3,000 trucks ply between Calcutta and Bombay. As soon as they leave the West Bengal capital, they have to first pass through Lachmoodi jungle, near Kharag-

pur. There these trucks are often looted by dacoits; at times, even Sikh drivers and conductors have also been done to death whenever they tried to resist. All pleas to the state government have fallen on deaf ears. Even truck drivers' unions also have not bothered to raise their voices.

Since the days when news spread around that Sikh militants have moved into other states, Sikh truck drivers have been ordered not to take more than three persons at a time. Also Sikh dhabas are being systematically razed to ground with bulldozers on the plea that they are hideouts of the Sikh militants. This charge has been hoily denied by dhaba owners. As the police keeps a vigilant eye on these dhabas, so far not even a single militant has been arrested from anyone of them. Still the Maharashtra government, in its misplaced zeal, has destroyed more than 250 dhabas on various highways emanating from Bombay. The plight of the Sikhs is all the more horrible, as almost all Sikh owners had built their dwellings on or near these dhabas. Now thousands of them have been rendered homeless and thrown on the roads. Could there be bigger rulum than this, especially when the governments subscribed to the theory of a welfare state?

## Sikhs Mocked At

The anti-Sikh mania of various state governments lies exposed from time to time by the misadventures of their functionaries. Fully backed by their bosses at the higher echelons of power, Haryana has been in the forefront of this Sikh-bashing. We know how Mr Bhajan Lal had disrobed and insulted Sikhs passing through Haryana during the last Aard games held in New Delhi. Every Sikh was searched and many forced to return to Punjab. Even senior army and civil officers were not spared from this humiliation. Women and children were also at the receiving end. Hugs and cries raised by various Sikh organizations and human rights bodies were of no avail. Rather, the Haryana chief minister received a pat on his back from the way Mrs Indira Gandhi.

The latest example comes from village Yaulki of Fatehabad sub-division of Sirsa district. There one police inspector, Mr Prem Chandra Sharma, pulled the beard of Sardar Asa Singh, an aged person. It was a direct assault on Sikh religion, as the keshas is one of the five essential Kakkas ordained by Guru Gobind Singh for all Sikhs. Fanned at this, local Sikhs have been staging a dharna on highway number 10 from October 12 onward. They have met the Fatehabad sub-divisional officer several times. This protest, buttressed by CPI and Janta Dal leaders of state, had some effect and the guilty inspector was transferred. But, to, within three days he was back at his old job, thanks to the pressure brought upon Mr Bhajan Lal by his relatives.

(Continued on page 26)



Eik na raman mercy too ka  
 Bida jai hain Pichey vich-  
 horay.  
 (Hyman incomplete—AG-557)  
 Break thy bangles  
 O youthful woman.  
 And thy arms  
 And the arms (sides) of thy  
 headstend too.  
 'Cause despite thy bedizen-  
 ment  
 O youthful woman  
 Others have shared  
 The bed with thy Beloved.  
 There is neither the mayanar,  
 (Bangle dealer, Beloved here)  
 Nor the bridelets  
 (any bangles)  
 Not the bangles;  
 (fine bangles)  
 The arms that encircled  
 thought  
 The Beloved's neck  
 Better burnt they be.  
 I wept  
 The universe wept with me.  
 The feathered citizen of the  
 forest.  
 (Alas-Alghora—Donahoe)  
 The Vindh of my fleshly frame  
 Did not weep with me.

None can tell, when and  
 where in the forests of India, in  
 the woods and dunes of West  
 Asia, in the thick jungles of  
 Lanka, along the mountain caves  
 of Tibet, Guru Nanak poured  
 forth this evoking and unfading  
 lament, unceasing with the cool-  
 ness of the moon, the paste of the  
 candle wax, and winter's still  
 deep in the snow, dead, pain of  
 Vindh, *Alghora*, *Jahmorye*, the  
 Merciless Divider of the lover  
 from the Beloved and edifier of a  
 shroud around him of the Black  
 Night when all hopes of union—  
 embrace, are deadened for him.

This is when a Sad, hooded,  
 mystic, gurmukh, has closed all  
 earthly doors on himself and in  
 utter darkness and despera-  
 tion, road to spiritual wrath,  
 blames himself, with dripping  
 eyes, striking hard with his hands  
 and head forehead at the Belov-  
 ed's Door and then the Beloved  
 may fold up the shroud of Black  
 Night of separation and a  
 moment of visual embrace—he  
 blessed. But it is very very hard  
 experiment.

This is enough for those who  
 comprehend what is the pain of  
 love and a lament for an embrace.  
 Sufi, mystic and Rishi literature  
 brims over such laments and  
 experiments. And see Mystic  
 Experiment below.

The Mystic Experience—  
 Emily Blount writes:—

But first, a hush of peace,  
 a soulless calm descends  
 The struggle of distress, fierce  
 impatient ends,  
 Mute music soothes my breast,  
 unuttered harmony  
 That I could never dream, till  
 earth was lost to me.  
 Then dawns the invisible the  
 Unseen its truth reveals:  
 My outward sense is gone, my  
 inward essence feels

Its wings are almost free, its  
 harbour found,  
 Measuring the gulf, it stoops  
 and dares the final bound.  
 The suffering  
 Oh! dreadful is the check,  
 intense the agony!  
 When the ear begins to heave,  
 and the eye begins to see,  
 When the pulse begins to  
 throb, the brain to think  
 again  
 The soul to feel the flesh, and  
 flesh to feel the soul.  
 Yes! I will lose, would wish  
 no feature leads:  
 The more the anguish racks,  
 the earlier it will bless.  
 And robed in fires of Hell  
 rent with heavenly shine,  
 If it but herald death, the  
 vision is divine  
 The Vision:  
 O God within my breast:  
 Almighty ever present Deity:  
 Life that in me has rest,

As I, undying Life, power in  
 Thee.  
 With wide embracing love,  
 The Spirit animates eternal  
 years.  
 Pervades and broods above.  
 Changes, sustains, devolves,  
 creates and rears:  
 Though earth and moon were  
 gone,  
 And suns and universes ceased  
 to be,  
 And Thou were left alone  
 Every existence would exist in  
 Thee  
 There is no room for death,  
 Nor atom that his might  
 could render void:  
 Thou, Thou, art Being and  
 Breath,  
 And what Thou art may never  
 be destroyed.  
 The response:  
 Strange Power! I trust Thy  
 might, Thou my constancy.

And in utter pain and dispar-  
 agement the scribe lamented:  
 Toee da kunwar aur phaur da  
 hujraab sarway  
 Jay jayway da mujhay eik  
 jhalak mahey jabeen year  
 kee  
 Brahma bhugat hungaa kaza  
 ba'd mein in tere phaur kee  
 Abhi in jee bharkay pee jayway  
 do mehey rangeen peyaur  
 kee.  
 Pray. Knock out all the doors  
 And tear off all the blinds.  
 Let me enjoy a vision  
 Of my Beloved's moony face:  
 I shall bear the mule!  
 Of all the knocking and the  
 teasing.  
 Let me for now at least drink  
 The colourful wine of His  
 love. (Brahma)  
 (Based on Scribe's "Hazrat  
 Miyan Mir—His Life  
 and Mission"—in print  
 in Patiala)

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Mumbai 400 001, 1992

# Guru Nanak and his followers

By : A.S. BHARJI

When, on the auspicious day, I wished a Brother a faith "mubarak", he did not respond. That seemed strange, so I wished him again, simultaneously looking straight into his face. This time he came alive, but only by half. A kind of sadness hovering his facial features gave a tell-tale hint. His attention seemed to probe into some gone-by days to which he alluded as he muttered "...There was a time when I saw in Guru's birth anniversary an image of mine... It used to be the greatest day of the year for me. But now, after four decades, I cannot hear a ring of hope, nor see a happy glow. Only gloom..."

My brother was a simple person, a regular visitor to the gurdwara where he read the holy scripture. And, of course, he sported a turban and a pressed beard. Yet, his mind seemed overcast by drooping spirits.

As a matter of fact, he was perplexed, not knowing his direction; the one he faced before turned out to be a mirage. All of a sudden I at once saw that the selfsame image that sat in the individual, as well as the collective mind of the community, would well up only due to the lack or loss of the faith in the goodness of life, which goodness, without a sense of purpose, dependable friend or guide, cannot as a rule fail to give one a slip sooner or later. In case one is fortunate enough to be genuinely guided but has no change for the better resolutely wrought within the change—that is normally measured by a corresponding soaring of spirits—then, the faith is certainly within oneself in the form of an illusory faith.

Now, I'm afraid I have to take in a sweep a very big chunk of the community who are begging such a faith masquerading under what come to be known as Sikh symbols. In point of fact, one can unhappily place their so-called leaders in the front row who have brought the rest of us to the present sorry pass, made us eat the humble pie, and robbed us of self-respect because didn't they denude us of the real path that the Guru would like us to find within ourselves? "Our body," says Nanak, "is not merely a cave which contains the soul. It also holds the indescribable and infinite Lord within it."

Hi leaders! Now, what have you folks to say? Everybody points an accusing finger at you being a very big, sticking fly in contrast of the community affairs, with some vital screw in your mental block coming loose. You are crude, tainted and unsound. The whole community has been made a scapegoat at the altar of your vanity, your messy, moth-eaten leadership. You must quit, and sooner the better for

everybody. We have had enough of you and it is time we glided out to the Master from whom you kept us away acting like a wily enemy who poised himself like an exhibit between two lovers. Your hypocrisy was exposed; your tracks are bare. To hell with you!

O Master, dearest Master! Let us not be forsaken because we had forgotten you. In favour of the tricksters who created themselves. We acknowledge we have been untrue to you and paid mere lip service to the uplifting principles that you bequeathed to us for our salvation. In truth, we have been false to our higher selves, inviting on our heads the choicest odium and ostracism from those who once loved us when we loved you. We now long to latch on to you; only you do as the blessed favour of keeping the very mugs of the fake leaders behind a dark curtain so that they cannot again force their lower selves on our consciousness. Give us the eternal wisdom, O Master, of recognising them for what they are in their masquerades, for we now begin to understand the meaning of what you once said, "The egotistics run wild, bereft of the Lord, without Naam". They are running wild and, in the process, made us suffer because we too ran along with them. Though wrapped in human skin, they have imbibed unhuman nature, they are black from within. Indeed!

We are also beginning to see the truth of what you say to the Lord, "O Lord, Thou alone art the Giver, the others are but beggars at Thy Door." Hence why should we go and beg from the beggars? Keep us at Thy Door, O Master!

In the context of the foregoing, one cannot but feel inspired to get to a deeper level of thought and ask, "What is it really that we mean to achieve by whatever we do, and how do we benefit by celebrating the Master's birthdays as per mere custom, the law of the unenlightened slave, the slave who never cared to get behind the Master's observations? No one sincere enough can aver that our norms of observing the holy days are correct, that is to say, as the Master himself would have us do."

If we cared to strike the human chord of our heart which is the only rational way to check the slide that we are in a way undergoing, we would at once acknowledge that the celebrations in almost all their aspects

have come to be nothing more than a vainglorious exercise not by the brave, but by the timorous. They are an exteriorisation of the precious energy that called for a high level of activity which, to be of any worth, is essentially devoid of the colours of drama contrived by the phlegmatic actors. They are a manoeuvre which bears the hallmarks of an organisation behind them of the spineless and a mere screen for the lapses by the guilty; a petition for recognising the ulterior motives of the jackal in lion's clothing—to keep the simple and credulous followers of the Guru away from their centre that is the real powerhouse of the nuclear they would drink there, by Guru's grace.

Those who churn out such preferences had better first cross-examine themselves and then come to us with a truthful answer as to how far on the road in progress or peace of mind or the fund of self-respect have they taken the community. How many miles have they covered in their rickety vehicle of the wooden mind, muddling up the normal flow of activity of those who set in it but, in reality, a dear, holding them as sacrificial goats, for no fault of theirs?

The definition of a human-being, as we all believe ourselves to be, that one should endeavour to become, is that he does things that can be justified either on the strength of some genuine guidelines, or through the results obtained. To the extent that the "buddhi" (intellect) that invests one with the main wherewithal to lead a normal life, is side-tracked, is a man or community (conglomerate of such men) harmed, degraded or even eliminated or should be considered eliminated, since degradation is a body without life.

Perhaps all of us know the scripture laying stress on this aspect by pointing out other levels of life such as quadrupeds, birds, different insects etc., as being merely different garbs for such souls of men as have not lived in tune with their high station because they thought and acted like those on the depressed levels of being. It is an exquisite law of our Maker to prevent wastage of material of a human garb for such souls as do not vindicate their status in life by corresponding actions, by transferring it to others in order that the said souls can act out their proclivities having the better of them, in the new atmosphere. We know it too that the creatures at a lower level of life than man

do not possess intellect, or possess it very nominally.

One may perhaps wonder why I am sharing my concern with others who may not really relish or may even positively dislike it. Well, as what they call a Sikh, but sitting as I feel I do on the other bank where I may jump off the train of life any time now, I thought it my duty (which, though painful to perform), to take a chance and make it clear for what it is worth (take it or leave it) with an anguished cry of warning in the light of what the community has already gone through and what in view of its peccable preoccupations and the least the infighting at the moment, it may yet pass through that it should soonest shake itself from its encasement with its unthinking, wilful activities, and wean itself from the practice of obdurately rushing on to deeds of disobedience of the "hukam" of the very Guru whom they have been professing to venerate through pretexts and plays like, for example, pretentious processions and pompous parades. This kind of display properly belongs to kinds of kindergarden. Calling themselves as followers of the Emancipator like Nanak but behaving as the playmates of prisoners does not do any credit to those who would summon the goddess of goodness, the deity of dignity and the sun of splendour by venturing out into the wide, open field around their self-manufactured sectors of sectarianism, and sharpening their muscles of mental and spiritual wisdom there.

Alas, the very fact, however, that few, if any, bother to raise a standard of effective revolt against the unbroken chain of malpractices perpetuated without any sane, uplifting, *gurmukhi* thought, goes to show that the community, by and large, is reeling in a mental and spiritual lowland of which, let some one tell me, should not at least a worrying well-wisher sit up and take due notice?

And so, when I do it up and try to say things that maybe taste bitter, the fault must be traced to the mental stomach of the rank and file within the community for the stretch that, in the first instance, to be sure, issued straight from the fanciful upper-story of the so-called leaders. It is fortunate that the warnings are undisturbed against errors of commission and omission like a heap of permanent truths given expression to by the Guru whose memory we cherish. By keeping on doing what we have been

every now and then in conjunction with the occasions ostensibly concerned with the true long, the saints, we are not only not heeding the commands ourselves but inducing others to think and live at cross purposes with them.

Coming to the scriptural essentials that normally claim our attention, as they should, I could unhesitatingly say that while the Granth Sahib gives out all the truths that man for his well and welfare needs, it is most emphatic about a few of them which form the basis of the structure of a full-blooded life of a human-being especially one who would lead his life as a true Sikh. These guidelines when honestly and faithfully followed, would turn the vicious creatures hidden within man which are mainly responsible for the odd and self-contradicting behaviour of his and help him take on healthy and indeed the most desirable traits. The dog of computerised habit with its poisonous propensity housed within him, together with the pig of senses sniffing at the stink of drugs and liquor, as also the crow of senses cowardice always fleeing from the light to hover over the junk of piling mundane ~~affairs~~ would cease their vicious racket and establish peace within the body and, by extension, in the atmosphere around.

In reality, these truth, complementary, form a medicine that effectively deals with these wily creatures: an insecticide that annihilates these pests inhabiting the innards of man. That medicine, that insecticide, is Naam, reference to which fills up the holy Granth Sahib emphasising the utmost importance of the need to drink it, for this, indeed, is the living water, the Nectar. It is obtained from the tank of Satlang the importance of which too is emphasised again and again in the scripture.

However, few would care because of the overwhelming pressure of worldly cravings that continuously eat into the vitals of man. Hence, the Guru has strongly recommended the inflexible nature of 'Bhau' (fear) and 'Bhas' (love) — the fear, in reality, being the uplifting fear of evil, and love sanctifying the relationship with the Master.

A surprise! If, in spite of all the daunting of his gracious message, the Guru finds his Sikh still basking in crude picture-drama as was the lovely picture simultaneously dreaming through it to land at a Shogun's, he will instead find one day that he has, in fact, landed on a powderkeg which, in this world, as a rule (have we forgotten?) does blaze once in a while. Therefore:

"Open thy eyes wide and see, some have gone; others are

going to go in their turn. Cast the world's glories to the fire, because Naam is the Only Treasure to grab."

That is Nanak, that is like his teachings, that is his message — guidance on celebration of his birthday, pointer to the way to straighten ourselves out, to eliminate the kinks in our personality — both individual as well as community's.

To celebrate, that, is to listen to Nanak reverentially, to obey him unflinchingly. And this obedience would be followed, as sure as the day does night, by the promised Treasure for which alone, according to the Guru, the body of man is graciously given to us.

The choice is ours.  
Best wishes!

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# GURU NANAK AND MODERN AGE

By MAHINDAR SINGH

The 523rd birthday anniversary of Guru Nanak will be celebrated by Indians all over the world on the 10th November 1992, because the teachings of Guru Nanak and the message he had given is universal and will prevail throughout the ages.

In 1969, on the occasion of the fifth centenary birthday of Guru Nanak, I was in Sweden, and an article of mine was published in the Swedish daily newspaper 'Dagens Nyheter', Stockholm, under the headline "Indians are celebrating the birthday of their saint born 500 years ago". The teachings of Guru Nanak are most relevant in today's world and will remain so for ever. The oneness of the human community is the keynote of his teaching. He had advocated the brotherhood of the whole mankind. A Sikh, in his daily prayer (ardas) pleads "Guru Nanak Nam Charidi Kasa, Tara Bhasi Sarhat Ka Bhala" meaning the welfare of all persons in the world. This is the philosophy of universal dynamism leading to the ideal of One World, which a follower of Guru Nanak wishes.

Today much is being said and written about Ayudhya Temple and Babri mosque. In 1469 A.D. Guru Nanak had declared, "There is no Hindu, there is no Mussalman". He meant to convey that all men and women belong to God and are equal. His deep sense of God transcended communal differences. Guru Nanak's age was one of cruelty and violence. He had challenged Babar's barbarism and loot and called him a tyrant. His words, "the age is like an open lair and the rulers are butchers" are recorded at page 145 of Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Nanak had questioned through and through the efficacy of a creed that could not save the people from oppression and humiliation at the hands of the invaders. He also questioned the justice of the Almighty when the Punjab lay trampled and groaning under the heel of the invader. This was the moment of crisis for him when he uttered the words, "Thou hast humiliated Khurasan but exposed Hindustan to dread. Thou hast sent the Mughal as the punitive agent. But as the people groaned under blight and affliction, Alas! Thou art realising these pains".

Similar is the crisis today. Many of our political leaders

have taken the masses for granted and have followed anti-people policies for keeping themselves and their party in power. This is a crisis of character and the blame must lie also at the door of the leaders who preach one thing and practise just the reverse. Hypocrisy has been an outstanding characteristic of society in India. It was in the fifteenth century and is still prevalent both in the priestly and ruling classes. They had double standards, one for themselves and the other for the rest of the community.

Guru Nanak pleaded for bridging the gulf between precept and practice, between what religious people preached and what they actually did in everyday life. The situation today is not different from what it was five centuries ago in India. So Guru Nanak's message eloquently remains relevant. For Guru Nanak, the practice of Truth in daily life, no matter what religion one professed, was the only safe course. He had broken the caste hierarchy and social stratification. To Guru Nanak, man was valuable as man and not a member of a particular family or community. He had said, "preposterous is caste and vain the renown, the Lord alone gives shelter to all beings" (Adi Granth, page 83). Even today in India we proudly declare our caste and display it in a spirit of chauvinism. He had also said, "we are good in talk, but evil in our deeds". How true is this of our religious, social and political leaders of today!

Guru Nanak's progressive ideas strengthened the concept of a socialist society, although in his quest for achieving equality amongst men, he had to face the opposition of vested interests, fascist princes, feudal dignitaries, the high-caste hierarchy, wealthy traders, monks and even sardars. Out of his love for the common man, he urged the abolition of the gulf between the rich and the poor through 'sangat' and 'pangat'. He emphasised the dignity of labour and criticised unearned income, parasitism and sycophancy in the words, "curst is the life of those who swell their bellies by over-eating" (Adi Granth page 790).

Similarly Guru Nanak's approach to the working classes was in conformity with modern ideas. He felt that everybody

should exert himself honestly to earn his living and should not pilfer what belongs to others. He had advocated 'Nam Japna'—realising the presence of God with you, 'vand chakna'—sharing of food with others, 'kirt karna'—honestly earning your living. These three are the cardinal requirements of Sikhism.

Guru Nanak's attitude to women remains most modern. He protested against the inferior status given to her in the society. He had taken a lead in the liberation of women in the 15th century and his pioneering effort has

given women a place of equality in Sikh society. But for the efforts of Guru Nanak in the direction of founding a decent and honourable society, the Indian nation would not have been what it is today.

Dr D.S. Kothari, the well-known Indian physicist, writes, "today man's survival depends upon Nannakisation. Only with the universality of religion, the civilisation can have peace and happiness. If Nannakisation is not accepted, humanity cannot survive".

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(Implementation)

# GURU NANAK Revolutionary and Reformer

By : AVTAR SINGH

In 1399, Timur's invasion brought an end to the organised government in North India. The governors declared themselves as independent monarchs. Due to constant conflicts between the new rulers and their provincial governors, there was a rule of lawlessness everywhere.

In 1489, when Guru Nanak was born, Babul Lodi was ruling North India. He was succeeded by Sikander Lodi, who ruled from 1517-1526. In 1526, Guru Nanak witnessed the foundation of the Mughal rule in India by Babar.

The Punjab had been the greatest sufferer from the 15th century onwards. Foreign invaders ruled through their military might. They exploited innocent people and committed unfold atrocities. A personal tax (*Jizya*) was imposed on non-Muslims. The Hindus were not given higher posts. Temples were raised to the ground and Muslim mosques were erected. Elders were made to crush Hindu culture and civilisation. Countless Hindus were converted to Islam on the point of the sword. This resulted into a wide gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims. The masses were greatly demoralised. Capital punishment was very common for any criticism of Islam. According to *Tarikh-i-Farukhi*, Boddhan Brahmin was executed by Sikander Lodi. Boddhan had said that Hinduism was as good a religion as Islam. According to Prof. Tayabji, "The story of relation between the Hindus and the Muslims has been an unhappy tale of mutual misunderstanding and hostility."

During Guru Nanak's time, both Hinduism and Islam had become corrupt and degraded. Purity and glory was seen nowhere. Castes have grown rigid and had split into numerous sub-castes. The true spirit of Hinduism has been reduced to a mockery. The rituals which beneited the Brahmins prevailed. Similar was the state of affairs in Islam.

"A Hindu is born to a Hindu. He wears the sacred thread. He wears it but continues to do evil deeds. He does not purify himself thereby."

"A Muslim feels proud of being a Muslim. Without a proper guide, he does not find the true path. He gropes in the dark. He cannot enter paradise without performing good deeds."

(*Ramkali di Var*)

The saints of Bhakti movement had paid only lip service to the ideals of a Casteless and

Classless Society. Guru Nanak took practical steps to break this vicious circle. He gave practical shape to everything he preached. He started Free Kitchen (*Guru Ka Langar*) in all the main centres. He persuaded his followers to eat together irrespective of their caste, creed or religion. He silenced the teachings and preachings of the Brahmins when he said:

"Impurity of the heart is greed of tongue, untruth, impurity of the eye is cowering, Another's wealth, his wife, her comeliness. Impurity of the ears is listening to columny."

(*Asa di Var*)

The most shocking and disgraceful act of Muslims was the conversion or destruction of temples. In many hymns, Guru Nanak described that age:

"The age is like a dragon sword. Kings are butchers. Goodness has taken wings and flown. In the dark night of falsehood I cannot see where the moon of truth is rising."

(*Majh ki Fart*)

Again he says:

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"Modesty and religion have disappeared.

Falsehood reigns supreme. The Muslim Mulla and the Hindu Pandit have resigned their duties, the Devil reads the marriage vows."

"Praises of murder are sung and people smear themselves with blood instead of saffron."

(*Rag Tilang*)

According to Guru Nanak, the Lod's had squandered the priceless heritage of India which was destroyed by Babar. The stain of hate and falsehood had made the hymns of the Sufis almost inaudible.

Guru Nanak was also witness to the treatment meted out to the people by the Mughal invaders in 1521. When Bhai Lalo spoke of the tyranny of the Mughals, Guru Nanak replied:

"I make it happen, friend Lalo:

With evil as his best man, Bringing a crowd of sins at his bridal procession.

Like a bridegroom Babar has hastened from Kabul,

To seize by force as his bride, O Lalo,

The wealth of Hindustan."

Babar ordered a general massacre of the people. Young



The author of this article, Sardar Avtar Singh "Komal", is a man of great parts. After serving various diplomatic missions of India in various countries, he got Post-Graduate Diploma in Journalism with distinction, securing 566 marks out of 700 and standing first in his class.

women were reduced to slavery. Others were forced to grind corn and cook food for the troops. The town was looted and then destroyed by fire. The barbarous treatment of prisoners, particularly of women, broke the tender heart of Guru Nanak:

"Terrible was the slaughter, Lord were the cries of the luminaries. Did this not awaken pity in Thee, O Lord?"

Guru Nanak removed the bitterness then prevailing between the followers of Hinduism and Islam. He laid the foundation of Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. He emphasised that there was no person high or low, superior or inferior, big or small, rich or poor in the eyes of God. Historians like Macauliffe and Bhai Kahan Singh have described Guru Nanak as a revolutionary. He strongly condemned the then rulers and their administration, who were responsible for the exploitation of the poor innocent masses. He condemned the then existing religious and social institutions and superstitious practices prevailing among both the Hindus and the Muslims. He also laid the foundations of a new "casteless and classless society." He never believed in violence but persuaded the masses in a peaceful manner to achieve his objectives. He did not condemn either Hinduism or Islam but denounced the corrupt and evil practices which had prevailed in his time.

Sangat and Pangat were the two institutions founded by Guru Nanak which have worked regularly for a new democratic and socialistic society. Guru Nanak was, thus, both a "Revolutionary" and a "Reformer" of his time and there is nothing contradictory or un-natural in being both, but his approach and preaching was "non-violent".

# The Ideal University

## For

## Education

## And

## Development

## In

## The

## 21st

## Century

Professor GOPAL SINGH PURI and Mrs KAILASH PURI after their successful Indian educational tour in June last extended their field of activities to the Far East, China, Japan and Korea.

They participated in a series of International Conferences, Seminars, Meetings and Tours. In Seoul (South Korea) they attended many international meets. These conferences brought together from all parts of the world religious leaders of every tradition, scientists, philosophers, leaders in humanities, education and government to work together for the new global order, based on spiritualism. The Seoul proclamation of support of the House of Unification for world peace at the Little Angels School reception brought Puri in close friendship with India's former Foreign Minister Sardar Suresh Singh. In the photograph they are seen in the hall together.

We herewith publish a note of Professor Gopal Singh Puri on an Ideal University.

1992 is the Centenary year of the founding of the Khalsa College, Amritsar and the 41st year of the publication of the *Spokesman Weekly*, with both of which I have been connected for several decades in more than one way.

Khalsa College, my alma mater in the Alma Mater of the Sikhs and the Punjabis. The *Spokesman Weekly*, as the name implies is the same voice of the Sikh community in social, religious, moral and political matters.

Both have done in their own way more than enough to raise standards of literacy, knowledge and understanding of the Cosmos and the world of man.

The future generations of intellectual world, I believe, remember with gratitude and pride the role that these two institutions played in the development of Sikh culture, polity, prestige and position in the Multicultural Society of the Indian subcontinent in the present century.

Let me borrow from the writings of philosopher Alexander Pope in the 17th century, the following piece to convey the feelings of the 21st century Sikh scholars in reference to the two institutions I have mentioned above:

"Shall then this verse to future  
ages pretend  
Thou wert my pride, philosopher  
and friend?  
That urged by Thee, I turn'd  
the sinful art  
From sounds to things, from  
fancy to the heart;  
For wit's false mirror held up  
Nature's Light  
Shew'd aching pride, what's  
right is right;  
That reason, passion, answer  
and great aim  
That true self love and social  
are the same;  
That virtue only makes our  
 bliss below;  
And all our knowledge is,  
ourselves to know.

When I was a student and later teacher in the Khalsa College in the thirties, under Bhai Jodh Singh, the Principal, the avowed aim of the institution was

to be a university. After the Independence of the country two universities arose out of it: the Panjab University and the Gurm Nanak Dev at Amritsar to form with the new Indian Panjab a triangular lighthouse of knowledge and wisdom for the coming generations of the Indians in general and the Punjabis in particular. The Panjab Agricultural University at Ludhiana serves a link with centre and state.

### Knowledge Is Power

The genius of the organisers of learning aptly considered that in the world of today, yesterday or tomorrow only knowledge is power.

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Thessalonians 15) for there is nothing without knowledge; Bacon rightly stressed (Religious Meditations of Hortensius), Knowledge itself is Power.

Gurm Nanak emphasized that by reading alone knowledge is not gained, but by meditation on the Word "Vidya Veechari tan paripthari". Knowledge is acquired.

Without referring to the 3-R's it may be said that "Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man"—Historics make men wise; poetry, witty; the mathematics, subtle; natural philosophy, deep; moral, grave; logic and rhetoric, able to contend", is the Baconian way of expressing the supremacy of knowledge.

Knowledge is of two kinds. The Indians express it in terms of *Smritis* (by reading) and *Srutis* by Revelation. To follow Bacon again one agrees that "The knowledge of man is as the water, some descending from above, and some springing up from beneath: the one informed by the light of nature, the other inspired by Divine revelation".

Wordsworth says that "Our meddling intellect misshapes the best of forms of things—We murder to dissect. Enough of science and of art; close up these barren leaves. Come forth and bring with you a heart that watches and receives".

Chestfield studies that "knowledge of the world is only to be acquired in the world, and not in a closet".

### Education in The Developing World

It is here that we come to the lot of down-trodden people, in what is called the developing world, where even literacy is denied, let alone knowledge. Knowledge to some is the gift of God to lucky-born some, the elites, the rest most ever not dare to listen to the word of wisdom. More than three fourths of the world is illiterate.

Of those who are literate among the millions the words of Thoreau apply aptly:—

"Mexico they know many things,

But let they have taken wings—

The arts and sciences,  
And a thousand appliances;  
The wind that blows  
Is all that anybody knows".

From times immemorial some crafty men thought that wisdom is not the lot of everyone. The caste system of India favoured only the highborn with the wealth of knowledge and the lowborn were to be content only to listen or hear, secondhand or through the wind alone, but not express it or use it for fear of punishment.

All through the centuries the human right to education has been denied to millions upon millions of Indian people. Those elites did this in the name of God.

To borrow the words of Swinburne—"But God, if a God there be, is the substance of men, which is man". It is precisely what I mean to say that man mislaid the cause of ignorance on fellow men and justified it by pretending to be pious.

Under some such conditions Tagore, as early as 55 or 56-120AD has said that "It is part of human nature to hate the man you have hurt". The so called highborn people of India, the so called Brahmins made it their life's mission to hate those who were considered to be low.



Guru Nanak protested against this caste of low and high caste classification and spent his life in this service. The Sikh Gurus gave to all, sacred scriptures in their own language to read, reflect, and meditate upon.

### Education in India

It is a matter of great concern that even after more than four decades of the Independence almost half the population of India is illiterate. The entire system of education in India is in crisis and out of date and funds.

Literacy rate in 1951 was 18.33%, in 1961 it was 26.38%, in 1971, it was 34.45%, in 1981 it was 43.56% and now in 1991 it became only 52.11%. The highest literacy rate of 91% is in Kerala and the lowest of 38.54% in Bihar.

If one analyses the cases of unrest, religious and sectarian riots, killings and thefts one sees the literacy ratio. Following more or less the same as in Kerala and Bihar, Education does make people understanding, tolerable, respectable and peaceful under odds.

Learning in India is identified with the Goddess Saraswati and wealth with Lakmi. We find similarity in other ancient civilisations. For example, Hermes in Greek mythology is Son of Zeus and Maia, is represented as messenger of the Gods, God of science, commerce, eloquence. The Romans identified him with Mercury and is represented as a youth winged and (Cupidus) bearded (petasus) and winged shoes (falx).

Coming back to India we find that further benefit of literacy especially the women literacy is to be seen in Kerala having the least infant mortality, the lowest proportion of married families in the age group 15-19 and a low death rate.

As a contrast the Uttar Pradesh, with a low literacy, has a high infant mortality rate, high death—birth rate, a high proportion of teenage marriages and a low couple protection rate. In the states of Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and in fact in most of the Hindi speaking area with low literacy results are similar to Uttar Pradesh.

The population of the country has almost tripled since Independence. While the absolute numbers of literates increased from 234 mill. in 1951 to 352 mill. in 1991, the number of illiterates due to increased population increased only marginally from 202 mill to 324 m.

In addition to high population pressure there is a governmental apathy for lack of will in bringing about reforms in the education system as well as helping teachers. Poverty is another serious threat to educational development.

Of the 1-6 years old children there are 140 mill., about 17% of the population. Of these 56 mill. are poor, threatened by neglect of essential child care. 43% have body weights far below the normal standard and grow so be too weak.

The standard of schools is chaotic. Of the 550,000 primary schools, over 200 thousand have no roof or even a thatched roof. 150,000 have no blackboards, 200,000 have only one teacher, 250,000 are without playgrounds, 700,000 are without drinking water, 300,000 are without toilet facilities. There is a poor hygiene, sanitation throughout, except some urban areas or large cities. Children sit on bare ground or on jute mat that is so rough that it pains. School furniture is sometimes limited to a chair and a small table for the use of the teacher.

It is not that India has not made progress in education but look at the magnitude of the problem in that 18 mill. children are enrolled every year. In the educational institutions the enrolment from grade one in school to university level is 150 mill. Since Independence there are 700,000 recognised and 300,000 non-formal and 250 thousand adult educational centres in the country. Although the educational commission recommended 8% of the GNP on education, only 3.5% is spent now. There is a tremendous lack of resources, especially in the rural areas. India is still a land of villages, 600,000 big and small, where even approach becomes impossible during the monsoons.

The curriculum is unrounded and teaching material is non-existent. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) cannot provide adequate standard of education. Although the aim is to provide total development of the child—physical growth, language skills, motor and cognitive, emotional and moral development but in actual practice very little is achieved and students have both had to use unfair and foul means to obtain a pass or a degree.

The National Educational Policy prepared in 1986 contains integrative child development with holistic approach up to six or seven years old children. But the fact is that a child enters the school with cruel and harsh experience. Some say even the child is robbed of his childhood and the fun of studying because of the hopeless physical conditions in the school. Some time ago discussion in Indian Parliament lamented of the system that instead of bloom acts like a wilt of the child in the process of learning.

There are Central and State Universities. Lately a network of

Agricultural, Forestry and Farm Forestry institutions have been developed to tackle the problem of wasteland management. There are teacher training colleges. Some of the Universities like Calcutta, Agri and old Panjab Universities are more than one hundred years old. Other well known ones like Lucknow, Benares, Aligarh, Delhi are also well over 40 years. But the bulk of these are new development.

There are Institutes of High Research and Teaching which have a University status like the Indian Agricultural Research Institute and others under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Indian Institute of Sciences, National Institutes of Engineering, that are doing useful work in educating Indians in Sciences and Technologies.

Some Institutes after well known Scientists of India by Raman, Bose, Saha, Saha and others after politicians like Nehru, Abdul Kalam Azad are also like Universities, Medical Colleges and Institutes are likewise very beneficent and turn out hundreds of Doctors, Nurses, Engineers, Scientists, Humanists. Nowadays more and more Universities are opening Computer and Business Administrative studies to cope with National development on par with developed countries.

Not all the graduates or Scientists trained are absorbed in the country. So there is a brain drain to the developed world from India. There may be more than 100,000 trained scientists working outside at present and the number is increasing. It is paradoxical that on the one hand India has a 50% illiterate people and there are millions of educated unemployed. However, India has discovered a way of spreading education from the air.

India has, using Inset 2a Satellite, solved partly the problem of spreading education. The Satellite Instructional Television Programme (SITE) began in 1975-76 has expanded with 570 transmitters covering more than 80% of the population and 60% of the land area of the country. 4000 direct to community receivers and 50,000 VHF community Television sets have been installed. Dr. U.R. Rao, Indian Space Research Organisation Director (ISRO) said that India can afford \$67 million to launching this satellite which lasts for 9 years and costs for the government \$134 mill. in advertisement revenue every year to Dardardhan. It is envisaged that educational programme will develop into many fields such as eradication of illiteracy, health care, resource mapping, weather forecasting, disaster warning systems to agriculture, forestry and land and water management and massive problems like famine,

hunger, starvation and epidemics. The United Nations is also impressed by India's progress in low-cost Satellite building programme.

Another notable progress is in India's Recognising two more National Languages—Konkani and Manipuri. There are already more than 300 languages and 1900 dialects in a country with 840 mill. people. Manipuri is 2,000 years old and Konkani is the language of tens of thousands of people from Bombay to Cochin. English is still the only language in education and Indian Parliament.

### Education In The Developing World

The 19th International Conference on Unity of Sciences (ICUS), organised by the International Cultural Foundation (ICF) in Seoul, S. Korea discussed the present state of Education under the heading "The Modern University in Transition" presided over by Dr. Tamas Kozma of Hungary.

Speaking of Sri Lanka, Professor Kalamsuriya said that "the university education in the Third World countries, very generally speaking, at present faces its most significant challenge. There is an insatiable thirst for higher education knowledge on the one hand, and on the other, on the other hand, the tragic inability of the residential type of University educational system to meet this demand."—A reference could be made in this respect to the ancient Indian Universities of Nalanda and Taxila where students lived the life of learning, rather than hurrying off to get a degree. Similar situation today is found somewhat in Cambridge and Oxford Universities that truly follow the residential pattern of learning.

The Sri Lankan problem was very much the same as that of Indian subcontinent. Professor Kalamsuriya rightly lamented that in his country only 25% of students are able to gain admission to University out of a population of 16.9 mill. out of which 4.5 mill. are of below 21 years, only 7132 obtained university admissions (25.86%) out of 3491 who were eligible. There are 8 Universities in Sri Lanka.

He quoted Professor Kozma in trying to understand the reason for this low University education in that "the real challenge of the Universities is their relation to Politics. In other words, whether or not they can contribute to the future of the world, and if so, on what basis".

### British Education

University and in fact the whole system of education is politically motivated. In Britain the Labour Party in Power introduced comprehensive education with large number of

**Knowledge and Wisdom are two separate; though inter-related possessions. Guru Nanak says even if one reads cartloads of books, he could still be ignorant.**

Students in schools and unlike Grammar School system the favourite of the Conservative Party students were allowed equal opportunities in learning. The Conservative system is to help, especially the brightest students so as to produce elites and specialists. The brighter students must also get their proper deal is the idea behind this.

A new National school curriculum has been introduced recently in England and Wales. Schools and colleges are given autonomy even to opt out of the State system and with parents and teachers governing body and even the Governors are allowed their own budgeting and raising of additional funds at local levels. Professor Kurti of Oxford has given a reasonably balanced view of the diversity and specialisation in Primary, Secondary and Higher education in Britain.

Since much of the modern educational system in English speaking countries of the Commonwealth or the old Colonial Britain like India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya etc. was developed during British rule all have adopted the British system with little or no change. Here subjects like British Constitution, Law, Commerce, Economics,

and even History, quite irrelevant to their countries are still taught in schools as of late pre-Independence years. Instead of taking for example the Indian or African culture foundation these are taught as optional subjects, as in British institutions.

In Britain, although in most cases a wide range of subjects are taught at school level, a certain degree of specialisation is introduced with examinations at ordinary (O level) GCSE and at Advanced (A level) stages of education. After A level students are admitted to Universities where 3 years are spent in the first degree. In Polytechnics, which were for examination purposes independent bodies, there is a year extra for giving students a taste of work in industry or other institutions of research. Polytechnics have also become Universities from September 1992 and the diversity in education in Britain has become much more wide.

The combination of subjects for specialisation has also been widened. For example there is a combination of "Physics and Philosophy" or "Engineering and Economics". There is thus a

combination of hard and soft Sciences.

Speaking of the situation Professor Kurti remarks, "Although the true Universities deal with a large proportion of human knowledge, both in the Humanities and in Sciences (including Medicine and Engineering), for the individual student there is a high degree of specialisation, often from the beginning of the undergraduate career. This is probably more pronounced in the European universities than in the USA" — "Whatever the aim of higher education, be it training for some vocation or developing an aptitude for learning and a faculty for a critical assimilation of existing knowledge (or even adding to it), it can only be achieved by an intensive study in a restricted field".

In the countries like India, Sri Lanka and others the aim of Universities education in most cases is the requisition of a degree. So far and foul methods, threatening the examiner of bribing are all used openly. Here the question is only of prestige, which can help the successful winner of a degree to gain and earn more money.

At one time, long past, teaching profession enjoyed great respect, but now only those who are less successful in money-making ventures as a last resort are driven to education. The same is true of school age children. They are harnessed into cheap labour very early even at 6-7 years of age, and not all are able to go to any school.

Even though in Britain much of education is free most of the pupils do not enter universities or cannot by virtue of their low attainments at school level. It is the experience of most schools that what at the age of 10 children are divided into two groups on their performance only 20-30% are regarded as intellectually superior and able to benefit from higher education in establishments with less demanding curricula.

Such like diversification based on attainments is not available in Indian educational system with the result that there is a great wastage of resources and child talent by having large classes where the teacher student ratio is very wide students are not well supervised. Some of the uncared for are among the dropouts and some believe with the Earl of Chesterfield of the 17th century wit that "The knowledge of the

world is only to be acquired in the world, and not in a closet" and say goodbye to school.

Learning under such arduous conditions, as already mentioned is equivalent to living in hell. But such-like failures and politics, even at the young school age, a good proposition, for they know like Daniel Webster that "There is already room at the top", even in a very crowded society and the top is playing politics.

### African Education

In his paper on "The African University: Ideas and realities", Professor Adjanga of University of Benin in Togo gave a vivid picture of problems facing universities which were developed after the Independence in the 60s in most of the countries. Although University of London Colleges were developed in Ibadan (Nigeria), Accra (Ghana), Nairobi (Kenya), Kampala (Uganda) they attained University status only after the Independence. The fast task for these naturally was to impart education in agriculture, population growth, and least for any Natural Resources developmental projects, which were for a long time managed by foreign specialists. I was also one of the expatriot specialists and developed Botanical-Forestry-Agricultural courses to Nigeria and Ghana through UNESCO and PAO cooperation. Many Universities and Polytechnics on the British pattern developed after 1965.

Like India these Universities were also influenced by political power of the day and Professor Adjanga rightly remarks that—"Academic excellence has become today a commodity in African Universities (and certainly so in other Universities around the world) for the acquisition of degrees are highly valued over the attainment of true knowledge out of purely materialistic contingencies; a degree to secure a safe place in the labour market".

Professor Abel Ishumi of the Durban University considered the position of education in the African Post war countries. There are several comparatively young universities, 25-35 years old in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Botswana, Lesotho and others. In the period 1961-1985 students from these countries were trained both locally as well as in overseas universities of developed countries of Great Britain, Europe and N. America. Some like Lumumba University was developed by the Soviet Union for Communist countries' students.

Lately the Commonwealth Foundation has helped the educational development in all the former British Colonies, now become Independent. All these universities had the capacity only of training in hundreds, rarely in thousands of students. The instructions given are in Arts,

Commerce, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Science, Veterinary Science, Architecture, Design etc. The largest number of graduates or end diploma in the Nairobi University during 1971-80 were in Education (2,515), Arts (1887) and in Engineering (1,260), out of a total of 10,756. Science was the next best subject with 949 and Medicine 752 first degree holders.

For the vast continent like Africa a few universities along the traditional pattern are not enough for training either in Natural Resources Development or in any industrial production. When I was in Nigeria and Ghana (1962-68), with the help of UNESCO, I prepared for the Nkrumah University of Science and Technology a project for Natural Resources Development Studies and also General Plans for Botanical—Ecological research. Some success was made in the development of new universities and Polytechnic on the British pattern. Ishumi's studies have revealed a warning intellectual tradition and declining rate of productivity in most of the African Universities. There is a political motivation and he quotes Shida to say that "intellectuals in the poor countries frequently are very disconnected with their governments. They are too progressive and feel that rulers have failed far short of their promises".

Quoting Professor Williams, the economics expert it was felt that "Research environment in many countries is rather fragile. Research which is contentious or reveals group differences, comments on social and economic information may not be welcomed by those in authority". Therefore, the progress in National Research activities by a number of Documented Research Projects during the years 1961-1986 in Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland was not much in evidence.

Professor Ishumi rightly concludes that—"The modern African University is thus an institution of higher learning that is currently, and for some foreseeable future, a compromise between the high ideals of an utopian philosopher on the one hand and the practical options of a problem-solving realist on the other, between convention and innovation; between tradition and radical change.

### Education in the Arab World

Professor Fayez M. Mina discussed the position of universities in the Arab World by stating that these are mostly under Government control and lack both social movement and academic freedom. There is a lack of educational material, shortage of faculty members in

(Continued on page 14)

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## The concept of the Place of Learning is not foreign to the Sikh thought, but our universities have not been able to give it a practical shape.

the vastly growing student population thirsting for education.

In 1950 there were six universities and three Islamic ones, but in 1986 the numbers rose to 83 in the Arab World. Similarly the student numbers increased from 166,000 in 1960 to 1,972,000 in 1990. This student number constituted only 2% in 1960 to 9.7% in 1985. Teachers also increased from 9,000 in 1960 to 107,000 in 1985. This tremendous increase turned the Arab elitist system to mass education as we know. Education in most of the Arab Universities is free. Research by Faculty members and students at present does not link up with social problems, futurology or environmental sciences. So these studies are in the control of foreign scholars.

In ancient times the Arab World used to boast of Alexandria library; but at present there are none even to fulfil the needs of education. There are shortages of almost every kind in teaching material and teaching staff. The teacher-training institutions are doing a bit, but the demand is overpowering.

The African National Universities are found the first, now Cairo University, Damascus and Alexandria in Syria, the American University, and Saint Joseph in Beirut and another American University in Cairo. There are 15 universities in Egypt and 6 in Saudi Arabia, devoted to Arab Thought. In 1990-91 an open University was established in Egypt.

Due to financial strains there are attempts now to limit free university education, except for talented students. There are colours of religion, sex and politics in educational institutions. The teaching imparted in these universities is in Medicine, Pharmacy, Law, Engineering, Science, Agriculture, Commerce, Veterinary Science, etc.

On account of the non-democratic political systems in the Arab countries the liberty and academic freedom suffers in Universities. There often comes a clash between scientific tradition and social change.

### Conclusion

From the foregoing brief account of the state of education via—economic development of some Developing countries of S. Asia, the Arab World and the African continent seems to show that since the second World War and the consequential

Political Independence of the former colonies, a far reaching progress has been made. But there is not enough, either in terms of literacy, scientific and technological growth or industrial output. As compared with their former rulers these countries are behind, in some cases a century or more in several aspects and need greater help.

In the meantime environmental crises has deepened, with it the economic recession, the higher numbers of bankruptcies, closure of flourishing commercial and business courses, unemployment, political and economic upheaval in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. All these have brought a wave of commercial and regional hatred and violence in the name of fundamentalism or Religion, Racism, starvation, homelessness, religion, etc. combined with natural disasters like drought, floods, hurricanes, fires, earthquakes and the manmade calamities like the Gulf War and Yugoslavia and Georgian conflicts etc. have further upset the progress not only in the world economics but also in the field of educational development of these countries. Some of the countries in close contact with the Soviet Union had socialist pattern of education. In others religion and politics had necessary partnership providing the resources and the study content.

Naturally, therefore, the traditional Universities are under pressure from all corners. There will have to be a new thinking on questions of secularism, democracy, academism, economic and human development in planning educational systems in the 21st century.

Environment will of course, take a chunk of the new syllabus. Some type of a compromise formula will have to be worked with politics and religion. In a way the inclusion of these with other areas of Hard and Soft Sciences in education would make teaching not only inter- and multi-disciplinary, but also approach holistic concept in training the human as well as the environment, its flora and fauna to be in ecological partnership for survival of the Globe through peace and prosperity.

New sources of energy will have to be developed in preference to polluting oil, coal and gas. Nuclear energy development has its own disadvantages. The

development of Solar, Wind, Waves energy is at the moment considered too costly. Bio-energy through the planting of trees not only to serve for conservation against natural disorders, but also to serve as sources of alcohol, heat and electricity is already taken up by a number of countries including India. This has in some cases upset the natural ecological balance resulting in CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> accumulation and global warming, health hazards etc.

It seems to me that educational development in the 21st century will have to be developed more thoroughly than what is hitherto done. The developed countries, who have been the gamers in the past in creating an educational development a more or less continuous brain drain from the developing countries in the last two to three decades would have to think about a two-way traffic now sooner than later. The North American continent in this regard is the principal area to concentrate on.

It is to be hoped that developing like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh in South Asia who are blessed with higher growth rate of human population will have to develop Family Planning programme in the educational system to narrow the gap between Rich and Poor to make the world a prosperous place for all mankind.

Education is a blessing to the human. Other creatures at best have developed instinct for survival of the individual and the species. But human has been equipped with a capacity of reasoning logic, foresight through higher consciousness, mind and brain development. There is also a Divine Light, the soul, the immortal in the mortal body which has made the human wise among the creatures as the image of the Creator, God. The Bible says that give instruction to the wise, he will be yet wiser.

### The Ideal University

Education though necessary equipment for survival is in itself a blessing. Without God's will, Hukam, Razu order education cannot be got. Millions upon millions of people are born and die without learning a word. Can the wisdom in humans change the destiny of the unfortunate ones or a question for the thirty-first century planners of universal and compulsory and free for all education to answer?

The world Scriptures are a mine of wisdom gathered from the human communities throughout the world through the ages. It may be stated that man is a thinking, laughing, singing, meditating and loving being among this creation. He no doubt occupies the position of the guardian of the created world and as such

his life is completely inter-linked with all other creatures big and small, lowly or highly evolved in the globe. In spite of education imparted so far in Science, Arts, Humanities, man is still not understood by his reality and potential.

The Bhagavad Gita (6.5-6) says "Man should discover his own reality and not thwart himself. For he has his self as his only enemy".

Satan is charged with a responsibility along with a right over other animals and inanimate world. Jainism records (Acaranga sutra 1.36) that "I have heard and realised that bondage and salvation are both within Yourself". It is the disjunction and disjunction in actions—right and in action or thinking—evil and good that makes one a truly wise person.

Knowledge gained through study is barren. If not acted upon, Knowledge gained becomes a part of the self through practice alone. Understanding it by heart, not by repeating by memory and the spirit is the dynamism of education.

Buddhism (Sutta Nipata 261) stresses that—"A good all round education, appreciation of the Arts, a highly trained discipline and pleasant speech; this is the highest blessing". The obvious reference is already pointed out to the system followed in the ancient Buddhist Universities of Nalanda (Bihar) and Taxila in Pakistan since neglected. Education has for its object the formation of character, says Spencer.

Taittiriya Upanishad (1.11.1) warns "reflect not a study of the Vedas". Here by Vedas are meant not only the written word, but the Nature Vidya or knowledge. Shakespeare (Antony and Cleopatra, records—"In Nature's infinite book of secrecy a little I can read", so to some nature is a sealed book. B.K. Skinner, a modern thinker likewise stresses—Education is what survives when what has been learnt has been forgotten (New Scientist, 21 May, p. 484). The bookish knowledge is mere knowledge.

Samuel Smiles puts it, however, that "The discipline of Colleges and universities is in general contrived, not for the benefit of the students, but for the interest, or more properly speaking for the ease of the masters". This is true as already mentioned in the case of some universities in the South Asian universities. H.G. Wells in "The outlines of History, 1951 states that human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe". But those who fought the two World Wars of this century were highly educated politicians. "History makes men

wise," says Baron and advises that "Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse but to weigh and consider," because all colours will agree in the dark". (Of Unity in Religion).

Religion is not a good source book of education to Post-Darwinian thinkers but Scripture has its own treasury of Truth, awaiting discovery. Hadith of Durrani I records: "I am leaving you a trust So long as you cling to it you can't go wrong. That is the rope God has extended from heaven to earth. That is the Quran". Similarly divine utterances are recorded in other holy books and what is missing is the meditation and contemplation on these. Bhagavad Gita (13.13) adds: "This is true knowledge: to seek the self, the self as the true end of wisdom always. To seek anything else is ignorance".

Knowledge and Wisdom are two separate though inter-related possessions. *Guru Nanak* says even if one reads cartloads of books, he could still be ignorant. Christian Science (Science and Health, 169) explains that "human philosophy has made God analike. The first is error, the latter is Truth. Metaphysics is above physics, and matter does not enter into metaphysical premises or conclusions. The categories of metaphysics rest on one basis, the Divine Mind".

*Guru Nanak* likewise confirms that mind is the spark of the Divine Light. This being so, the truth of it is, the first rudiments of education are given very indirectly by most parents". (Sir Richard Steele).

"To make your children capable of honesty is the beginning of education" puts in John Ruskin and goes on to add that "Your honesty is not to be based either on religion or policy. Both your religion and policy must be based on it. Your honesty must be based, in the sun in its vacant heaven, poised, as the lights in the firmament which have rule over the day and over the night."

Education should be in the hands of parents and teachers both, and in both hangs the fortune of the world, as Petrarch asserts in the House of Commons on 15th June, 1374 that, "Upon the education of the people of this country the fate of this country depends". He defines in another speech on 11th March 1373 that "A university should be a place of Light, of Liberty, and of Learning".

Most of the British Universities contain one or the other virtue, but in most of the Universities in the developing countries as already pointed out, there is very little of the three benefits of learning.

G.M. Trevelyan says that, "Education has produced a vast population able to read but unable to distinguish what is worth reading". True education is the education of the heart, hands and head, for *Guru Nanak* advocates while the head is meditating, heart invigilates to serve the people by hands.

I think the best of education is well said by John Wosley (Letters 1915—rules of conduct):—

"Do all the good you can,  
By all the means you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
At all the times you can,  
To all the people you can  
As long as ever you can."

C.A. Helvetius (in Discourse on Education) says—"Education makes us what we are". So it is of the utmost importance for the planners of education in the next century to be precise in what they look for in the people to possess. Milton is for complete and generous education "that which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully and magnanimously all the offices both private and public of peace and war."

There is yet another side to education aptly put in by Lord Melbourne to the Queen in that "I don't know, Ma'am, why they make all this fuss about education; none of the pages can read or write and they get on well enough". But to men of faith "there is knowledge of five kinds recorded in Tatvarhasutra 1-19-29—sensory, scriptural, clairvoyance, telepathy and omniscience". The object of education is to develop a whole Man, and not merely to fit him for the job in hand as Lord Melbourne thinks, nor for the development of the resources necessary for his wellbeing, which God has abundantly granted in His Benevolence. The orthodox or traditional University, East or West has neglected the object of education of Man as the supreme door in the family of created beings.

Tao says that—"In the world everyone knows enough to pursue what he does not know, but no one knows enough to pursue what he already knows". So there is a confusion. Jesus (John 7, 16-17) answered that "My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me". *Guru Nanak* affirms (Adi Granth, 62) that while through learning one accepts that Realisation of Truth is higher than all else, Higher still is truthful living. To live up to word in deeds is education indeed.

We need doers of the word, and not hearers of the word only. For anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who observes his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself and goes away and at

once forgets what he was like (James 1, 23-24). Judaism likewise pinpoints that "Not study is the unifying thing, but action, and when multiplied word, multiplies sin".

The founder of the International Cultural Foundation and the International Religious Foundation and host of other organisations is in search of "Absolute Values for the New World Order", the theme of the 19th International Congress on the Unity of Services. He announced for the creation of the world University Foundation to promote the world-wide exchange of knowledge, as well as the exchange of Professors and students. This is, he thinks, necessary for the New World Order, which "will consist of communities, nations, each bound together by a common religion and culture and joined in economic and political relationship."

Speaking on the role of scholars for the sake of the New World order at the 19th ICUS, this August he said that it is "to ensure a well rounded education for individuals, close communication between all segments of society"—For this, "people must constantly cooperate with one another in order to raise up individuals who can develop civilised society, families, churches, schools and society. The greatest task of our generation is the problem of how to implement this well rounded education in our pluralistic global village".

Addressing the scholars, he said "you are the treasure house of knowledge in the society. Your students learn more from the person you are than from the knowledge you teach. Students imitate the teachers' habits, learn the teachers' attitude about society, and are deeply influenced by the teachers' sense of values. You Professors must always, in the teacher's position, become examples for the future. Your mission, which is to set up a new cultural tradition in absolute value of true love, is a precious thing".

In the Founder's message to the Sung Hwa University in 1992 he says —

"The University is the sanctuary for learning the greatest Truth. What is the Truth? The greatest Truth is first, to know clearly the Universe and God, who is the centre of the Universe. The second is to Man who is the centre of the world, and third to know the ideal world which God and Man together have tried to establish." This message is no different than that of *Guru Nanak*, which he gave in Sidh Gosth.

"The key to realising these three goals, I believe, can only be true Love. Therefore, I have

always taught the ideal goal of education is to love God, to love Man and to love the World. Education is the practice of this goal," Says Rev. Moon.

This concept of the Place of Learning is not foreign to the Sikh thought, but our universities have not been able to give it a practical shape.

In his concept of Education, theory and practice, Rev. Sun Myung Moon claims (5-177) that—

"The Unification Church (that he has founded) is a school far greater than Harvard or Yale or Princeton, and is a place where only the elite of the universe can enroll. Harvard University can graduate a Ph.D., but that person can only turn around and teach theories on a blackboard. Even a thousand Harvards cannot create one son of God, but our school turns out sons of God every day". How much do I wish our Universities in the Punjab could make such a claim!

Finally, inspired by the above words of Rev. Moon I would like to hope that the Centenary Khalsa College, Amritsar, could, if it realises, transform itself into a Khalsa University of the type of Rev. Moon. Because the College has provided Distinctives in the past and it can do it again, who can rise to such heights of purpose.

In the words of Robert Browning—

"A low man seeks a little thing to do, sees it and does it."

A big man, with a great thing to pursue,  
Dies ere he knows it.  
The low man goes on adding  
one to one,  
His hundred is soon hit.  
The high man, aiming at a million

Misses an unit.  
That has the world here—  
should be need the next.

Let the world have him!  
This throws himself on God,  
and unperplexed  
Seeking shall I find Him"

The publicity for the creation for the real Khalsa University can well be trusted to the *Spokesman*, Weekly who in Walter Scott's words that "Fair, Fat and Fercy" has now reached Forty and one. *Guru Nanak* and *Guru Gobind Singh* Foundations can join hands to give to the world in the 21st century this Godly Seat of Learning.

The task can be accomplished, Rev. John Holmes believes—

"The Universe is not hostile, nor is it friendly. It is simply indifferent". Let us all take advantage of the indifferent universe at this time and accomplish a much needed task for the 21st century.

In the period between the first and second World Wars, with the emergence of authoritarian systems of penal law, the problem of capital punishment appeared before the world in an acute manner.

Since then many countries have abolished the death penalty through constitutional or legislative provision. These countries are (1): Argentina, Australia (Queensland), Austria, Brazil, Columbia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Federal Republic of Germany, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Italy, Mexico, 35 states out of 29 and the federal territory, Norway, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of San Marino, Sweden, Switzerland, United States of America (the states: Alaska, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Minnesota, Wisconsin), Uruguay, Venezuela. Besides there are countries like Belgium, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg and Vatican city State where sentences to death are passed but in which such sentences are never carried out by virtue of an established custom. Further there are States in which the provision for death sentence is provided but in fact it has virtually disappeared. In general, the modern tendency is more and more to drop the death penalty.

In India, in 1933, a motion was adopted in the Legislative Assembly of India at Simla, granting leave to introduce a Bill to abolish the punishment of death for offences under the Indian Penal Code. The Bill was however never moved although leave was granted to introduce the Bill. After independence, Resolutions for the abolition of capital punishment were moved twice in the Rajya Sabha and once in Lok Sabha, but due to government's opposition, could not be passed.

This was surprising because Congress party, which was then the ruling party of India, was expected to support the bill for abolition of capital punishment. Mahatma Gandhi, father of the nation, was opposed to capital punishment. He had said:

"Deprivation of individuals can never be a virtuous act. The evil does cannot be done to death. Today there is a movement afoot for the abolition of capital punishment and attempts are being made to convert prisons into hospitals as if they are persons suffering from a disease".

On another occasion he had admonished:

God alone can take life because he alone gives it.

Recently the international community has unitedly raised its voice against use of death penalty as an instrument of political expediency. Nazi crimes,

## Sukhdev Singh Sukha—Harjinder Singh Jinda's Case BLOOD STAINED JUSTICE

By : Dr. GURMIT SINGH, Advocate, Punjab and Haryana High Court, Chandigarh

the spectacular purges of the East European countries during the Stalin era and some notorious trials and brutally delayed executions in the Western countries have attracted the attention of jurists and sociologists, of intellectuals and the public at large and the matter is again being passionately debated. On 11th December 1977, a conference held at Stockholm on the abolition of the death penalty, which was attended by more than 200 delegates from Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, North and South America and the Caribbean region had resolved:

"Executions for the purposes of political coercion, whether by government agencies or others, are equally unacceptable. Abolition of the death penalty is imperative for the achievement of declared international standards".

This conference called upon non-governmental organisations, both national and international, to "work collectively and individually to provide public information materials directed towards the abolition of the death penalty".

It further called upon all governments to bring about the immediate and total abolition of the death penalty and also requested the United Nations to declare unambiguously that the death penalty is contrary to international law.

In India, the guidelines laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court on the subject of the death penalty are inconsistent and confusing. In the case "Aprion Joseph Versus State of Kerala", Mr Justice I.D. Das with Mr Justice J.M. Shelat, laid down the law as under:

The determination of sentence in a given case depends on a variety of considerations, the more important being, the nature of the crime, the manner of its commission, the motive which compelled it and the character and antecedents of the accused. So far as the accused before us are concerned, it appears that in their excessive zeal for their party they felt unduly provoked by the success of the meeting organised by the Karshak Sangham and being misguided by political intellectuals and cult of violence they committed the offences in question soon after the

said meeting. We, therefore, feel that the interest of justice would be fully served in this case if we substitute the sentence of imprisonment for life for the sentence of death".

This was a case from Kerala. In another murder case from Tamil Nadu, titled "Subbiah Thevar Vs State of Tamil Nadu", Hon'ble Justice K.K. Mathew with Mr Justice A.N. Grover and Mr Justice A.K. Mukherjee of the Supreme Court of India held as under—

"The alteration between the accused and the deceased would show that the accused were smarting under the feeling that their community itself was humiliated by one of its members being beaten with broom stick and that the attack was prompted by that feeling and the insolent attitude of the deceased towards their community. In these circumstances, we feel that the extreme penalty of death was not called for and that lesser sentence of imprisonment for life would meet the ends of justice".

Both these judgements were passed under the Code of Criminal Procedure 1898 which was replaced by a new Criminal Procedure Code 1973 w.e.f. April 1, 1974. While under the old Act, both the alternative sentences of death or imprisonment for life, for murder and certain other offences under the Penal Code, were normal sentences, under the new Act the normal punishment for murder and six other capital offences under the Penal Code is imprisonment for life, and death penalty is an exception. Mr Justice P.N. Bhagwati of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in his minority judgement in case of Bachan Singh versus State of Punjab even held death penalty for murder, as an alternative to life sentence, as *ultra vires* of the Constitution.

Mr Justice M.P. Thakkar with S. Martinez Pazzal Ali and A. Varadachari J.J. of the Supreme Court of India held in the case Machhi Singh versus State of Punjab that the extreme penalty of death need not be inflicted except grave cases of extreme culpability. Life imprisonment is the rule and death sentence is an exception.

In 1979, India signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Art. 6

clause (i) and (ii) of this Covenant calls upon for the abolition of death penalty.

But in spite of liberalism expressed through provisions of new Criminal Procedure Code and by signing International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, recent decisions of the Apex Court, particularly in cases involving Sikh fundamentalists, have not shown any leniency in imposing death penalty. In Bachan Singh Vs. State of Punjab, a new factor was introduced as a guideline for awarding punishment in cases of murder. It was held that impact which the murder produces on public mind should be the decisive factor. In case of murder which do not affect public order, even the provision for life imprisonment in section 302 of the Indian Penal Code as an alternative punishment would not be justified but if a murder unleashes a tidal wave of such intensity and gravity and magnitude that its impact throws out of gear the even flow of life, then death sentence will be the appropriate punishment.

In this connection, it is important to discuss the two murder cases connected with operation Blue Star i.e. the biggest and the most significant army action against own countrymen ever taken in the world. It resulted in not only killing of hundreds of pilgrims staying in Golden Temple Complex to celebrate the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, but also left 350 bullet marks on Harmandir Sahib, the holiest of the Sikh shrines. Akal Takht, another historical building, was smashed. As many as eighty of high-explosive squash-head shells were pumped into Akal Takht. At least 1500 people, including women and children, died inside the complex who had nothing to do with militants. The sacred and historical palanquin containing historical arms of the Gurus and Sikh martyrs, has been destroyed along with the arms. The gold of the gold-tipped arrows of Guru Gobind Singh had melted off. The holy volume of Guru Granth Sahib in the Golden Temple was pierced by a bullet. The two gold palanquins meant for carrying Guru Granth Sahib from the Akal Takht to the Harmandir Sahib and back everyday had been gutted. Gurdwara Baba Deep Singh in the Parkarma and the two clock-towers had been damaged. The parkarma itself got submerged under the heavy

weight of military tanks. The gold on the dome of the Akal Takht had melted and was looted. The precious diamond-studded canopy was reduced to ashes. The reference library and offices of the SGPC were destroyed besides other devastation in the complex. There was a blood bath like of which had not been witnessed in the Golden Temple since it was built. Most uneducated Sikhs construed the desecration of their temple as an act perpetrated by a Hindu government. In different parts of India, Sikh troops mutilated and slew their Hindu officers. Many Sikh members of Parliament and State legislatures resigned their memberships. So did one diplomat and several civil servants. Many Sikh intellectuals and social workers headed back knowing conferred on them by the government.

Operation Blue Star had admittedly offended the religious feelings of some members of the Sikh community and resentment was expressed even by some of the Sikh employees of the Delhi police posted for Prime Minister's security, as is recorded by Mr. Justice K. Jagannatha Sastri of Supreme Court of India in the case of Kehar Singh etc. versus State. Sarwant Singh, a police constable, Kehar Singh working as an Assistant in the office of the Director General of Supplies and Disposals, Balbir Singh a Sub-inspector of police, were tried for conspiring in murder of Indira Gandhi, who was shot dead on

21st October, 1984 at about 8 A.M. by aforesaid Sarwant Singh and Beant Singh a Sub-Inspector of police. According to charge sheet filed in court, since Blue Star Operation, Balbir Singh was planning to commit the murder of Indira Gandhi and discussed his plans with Beant Singh who too had similar plans. Balbir Singh also shared their intention and prompted Sarwant Singh to commit the murder of Indira Gandhi. In the first week of September 1984, a false alarm happened to sit on a tree near the main reception of Prime Minister's house. Balbir Singh spotted the false alarm, called Beant Singh there and pointed out the false alarm. Both of them agreed that it had brought the message of the tenth Guru of the Sikhs and that they should do something by way of revenge of the Blue Star Operation. Both of the above accused performed Ardas then and there.

Hon'ble Supreme Court of India which had held in Subash Thavar Vs State of Tamil Nadu supra, that where accused were smarting under the feeling that their community itself was humiliated and committed murder, then extreme penalty of death was not called for changed its opinion in the case of aforesaid persons accused of murdering Indira Gandhi under similar feeling and confirmed death sentence on Sarwant Singh and Kehar Singh as Beant Singh, one of the alleged assassins had been shot dead by the Indo Tibetan Border Police at the time of incident. Balbir

Singh was acquitted for lack of evidence. None of the three Judges who heard the case was a Sikh and therefore they were innocent towards the Sikh psyche which was deeply hurt by Operation Blue Star which had damaged their holiest shrine. Mr. Justice Jagannatha Sastri in his judgement observed "The Blue Star Operation was not directed to cause damage to Akal Takht. Nor it was intended to hurt the religious feelings of Sikhs. The decision was taken by the responsible and responsive Government in the national interest. The Prime Minister (Late) Mrs. Indira Gandhi was, however, made the target for the consequences of the decision. The security guards who were duty bound to protect the Prime Minister at the cost of their lives, themselves became the assassins. Incredible but true. All values and all ideals in life, all norms and obligations are thrown to the winds. It is a betrayal of the worst order. It is the most foul and senseless assassination. The preparations for and the execution of this heinous crime do deserve the dread sentence of the law."

Thus while imposing death penalty the judges did not attach importance to the fact that Sikhs' pride was greatly hurt by Operation Blue Star during which the Sikh people had been humiliated. It was reported that a woman who pleaded with a soldier made Golden Temple complex during Operation Blue Star, to get some water for her child dying of thirst

was told, "Why should we serve you water? Have we come here to kill you or serve you water?" Addressing another one who made a similar request, he retorted, "Not long ago they were saying that we won't give any water to Haryana or to Rajasthan. You bastards, now, none of you will get water even to drink."

It after hearing about such barbarities, under emotional stress, a murder is committed, will it be a fit case for awarding death penalty, is doubted by many a jurists and legal luminaries. Supreme Court's opinion in Appen Joseph's case says that if a murder is committed by accused in "excessive zeal" when they felt "unduly provoked" being misguided by political intolerance and cult of violence, interest of justice is served by awarding life imprisonment is fully applicable to assassins of Indira Gandhi unless the law is not the same for all the citizens of India and it varies with personalities involved. Even International Commission of Jurists had opined that a case for death penalty was not made out. In fact the hon'ble Judges of the Supreme Court of India looked at the case from a wrong perspective. The accused had committed the murder of Indira Gandhi because they considered her personally responsible for the decision to order Operation Blue Star as she had not taken into confidence the President of India or her cabinet colleagues in this regard. The assassins were not at all interested in the change of

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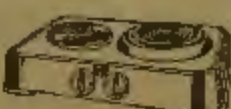
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government nor they were even charged with Sedition. But Mr. Justice G.L. Oza in his judgement observed:

"In our country we have adopted and accepted a system wherein change of the leader is permissible by ballot and not by bullet. The act of the accused not only takes away the life of popular leader but also undermines our system which has been working so well for the last forty years."

Another important aspect ignored by the Honourable Supreme Court while applauding operation Blue Star, to condemn the assassins of Indira Gandhi to death, was that those who resisted army's entry in Golden Temple Complex were acting in self defence guaranteed under section 96, 97, 98 and 100 of Indian Penal Code which confer on a person right to defend his body and property or body and property of any other person. Section 96 clearly lays down that nothing is an offence which is done in the exercise of the right of private defence. Criminal trespass is one of the offences specified against which there is a right of private defence. Article 25 of the Constitution of India confers on citizens of India the fundamental right of free profession, practice and propagation of religion. Art. 26 confers right to manage own affairs. It was held by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the case of Venkataramana Devaur Vs State of Mysore:

"The question whether any class of persons should be admitted to the precincts of a religious institution or a temple or which part of the temple should be open to any class of persons is a matter of religious practice and religious usage and hence is a matter in regard to which freedom is guaranteed by the Article (25) and Article 26 to the followers of every religion except in so far as the constitution provides for any limitation being placed on such freedom."

Sikhs have a tradition that no one wearing shoes is allowed to enter the Golden Temple Complex and even entry to police and army personnel is denied. In 1846 when soldiers of East India Co. tried to force their entry in the Golden Temple Complex with shoes on, to capture certain Sikhs inside, an Akali (Nihang Sikhs) were then called Akalis with some other Sikhs took positions in one of the buildings Akal Takht and resisted the troops. A Subedar was killed, another officer was wounded besides several

soldiers. Extra reinforcements of army were summoned and the Sikhs offering resistance were arrested and brought to Lahore. Ganda Singh, leader of the Sikhs and his associates were arraigned for the murder of the Subedar and wounding the Commandant of the corps and some of his men. Ganda Singh and two of his associates were sentenced to be hanged and the remaining six prisoners were punished to undergo six years' rigorous imprisonment. But the sacrifice of Ganda Singh and his associates did not go waste. H.M. Lawrence, Resident of the British at Lahore, issued a notification dated 24th March, 1847, which reads:-

"The priests of Amritsar having complained of annoyances, this is made known to all concerned, that by order of the Governor General, British subjects are forbidden to enter the temple (called the Durbār) or its precincts at Amritsar or indeed any temple, with their shoes. Nor are the Sikhs to be molested, or in any way to be interfered with. Shoes are to be taken off at the Bunga at the corner of the tank and no person is to walk round the tank with his shoes on."

Another historical tradition of the Sikhs is that they have never spared the person responsible for the desecration of the Golden Temple. Zakariya Khan who was Viceroy of the Mughal Government for Punjab from 1726 to 1745 had deputed Massa Ranghar to stop the Sikhs from taking a dip in the holy tank at Golden Temple Amritsar. He got the holy tank filled up, took his seat inside Harmandir where he smoke bubble bubble and spot. Dancing girls were made to dance in the sacred shrine. On hearing about it, two devout Sikhs, Mehtab Singh of Mirankot and Sukha Singh of Marri Kambo, vowed to kill Massa Ranghar. They disguised themselves as Mughal officers, took bags full of round pieces of earthen pots to give an impression that they were bringing revenue, and rode straight to the temple. Nobody suspected them. Mehtab Singh entered the temple, cut off Massa's head and both disappeared in the twinkling of an eye. The assassins of Indira Gandhi too were only repeating the Sikh tradition as they had no personal grouse against her. According to well recognised principles of law, offences which are committed in association with a political or religious tradition or to take revenge for political persecution are political offences in which death sentence should not be awarded. Death penalty as an instrument of elimination of political rivals in the struggle

for power or assertion of certain convictions and values however irrational and out-dated they may be, is not approved by civilized societies. Many countries, which have abolished capital punishment for the crime of murder have retained it for treason or offences against the State. This illustrates that the politically constituted authorities want to retain this weapon in their armory, patented by the legislature, maintained by the judiciary and sharpened by the executive, for use to smother their political opponents.

Justices, from time to time, have called upon the governments to abolish the death sentence. Mr. Justice Krishna Iyer of the Supreme Court of India in his judgement in Dalbir Singh's case had observed:

"And the myopic view that public executions backed by judicial sentence will perform the 'funeral of all criminals and scare away potential offenders' is a die-hard superstition of sociologically and psychologically illiterate legalism which sacrifices cultural values, conveniently turns away from the history of the futility of penalty over the ages and unconsciously violates the global reality that half the world has given up death penalty, *de jure* or *de facto*, without added calamity, and the other half is being educated out of this State-practised lethal violence by powerful human rights movements at once secular and spiritual."

Demand for abolition of death sentence has gained momentum, particularly in Punjab, after confirmation of death sentence by the Supreme Court of India on Sukhdev Singh alias Sukha and Harjinder Singh alias Jinda who are accused of killing Gen. A.S. Vaidya on 10th August 1986 at Pune (Maharashtra). General A.S. Vaidya had become Chief of the Indian army on 1st August, 1983 and he had retired on 31st January 1986. During his tenure, in the year 1984, Operation Blue Star was carried out, as per judgement of the court, "by the Army General Mr. A.S. Vaidya, at command of the Union Government and the Honourable Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi." According to Mr. Vasant L. Ruikar, Judge of the Designated Court, Pune, who tried the accused: "On account of this Operation Blue Star, the sentiments of the Sikh community in Punjab probably were hurt and the terrorism took a different turn, consequent to which India lost its Honourable Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi on 31st October,

1984. It seems that since the operation Blue Star was carried out by the Army General A.S. Vaidya who was also known as Arun Kumar Vaidya, he was the other target of the terrorists following the murder of Mrs. Indira Gandhi." According to prosecution version, on 10th August 1986, when Mr and Mrs. A.S. Vaidya left for shopping in their car, accompanied by the security officer Harjinder Singh alias Jinda who was driving an Ind-Suzuki motor cycle, came parallel to the car while Sukhdev Singh alias Sukha who was on the pillion seat of that vehicle shot three bullets from his pistol on the head of Gen. A.S. Vaidya whereby Mr. Vaidya collapsed on the shoulder of his wife madam Beegamata Vaidya."

Both Jinda and Sukha fled away on the motor cycle and disappeared and they could not be traced for a sufficiently long time. It was on 7th September 1986, according to police version, that Sukhdev Singh alongwith Nirmal Singh alias Nima & Darshan Singh of Village Gadali district Amritsar, happened to come to Pune again for collecting the ammunition and the pistols and revolvers to take them back to Durg. But while they were going back their motor cycle met with an accident with a truck as a result of which weapons which they were carrying fell down. A large number of people collected there and when some of them tried to help them, Sukha raised the revolver and threatened to shoot any one of them, which arose a doubt in the minds of the people. Matter was reported at police station whereupon police arrested Sukha and Nirma. When the two were being taken in a jeep to Pimpri Police Station these two accused are alleged to have raised the slogans "Khalistan Zindabad" and that "they use the persons who killed Gen. Vaidya". This confirmed the doubts, according to prosecution version, that they were among those persons who killed Gen. A.S. Vaidya. The investigations were done by Deputy Superintendent of Police Mr. R.D. Pandey and the charge sheet against Sukha, Nima etc. was filed by the C.B.I. on 14th August 1986.

After the charge was framed, Sukha on 19th September, 1986 expressed his desire to make a statement before the court to the effect that he is the man who killed Gen. A.S. Vaidya. He made this statement in open court. He was given 3 days time to think over the matter and give a detailed written statement to that effect if he so desired. Accordingly, on 26th September, 1986, he gave his detailed written statement where he admitted that

he fired four bullets and it is he who killed Gen. A.S. Vaidya. Normal Singh alias Nima against whom the only charge was that of conspiracy was held by the court to be not guilty and was acquitted as there was no evidence against him. The prosecution during trial relied upon the Judicial confession recorded under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code by Sh. S.L. Khasada, Judicial Magistrate First Class, Kurkee. The court disbelieved this confession of Sukha as not voluntary and not truthful and a farce. The court also acquitted all the three accused namely Sukha, Nima and Jinda of the offences under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act.

However, the Designated Judge while finding Sukha and Jinda guilty of murder relied upon the confession made by both of them during their examination under section 313 Cr.P.C. Sukhdev Singh during the course of his examination was asked:

Q. "It is further in their evidence that the pillion rider of the said motor cycle fired three shots from the revolver-pistol at the driver of the Maruti car and then he kept his revolver in his hand bag. What do you have to say in regard to this."

To This Sukhdev Singh gave the following Answer:

It is false. That was black Ind-Suzuki motor cycle and not red; it was I who was the pillion rider and it was I who fired four bullets from fire arm at General A.S. Vaidya who was driving the said Maruti Car."

Every lawyer knows that above statement is not a confession or even admission. A confession is to be read as a whole. The first sentence of the statement that "Sols put to the accused are false cannot be dissected and ignored. Moreover, while according to prosecution evidence it was a red Ind-Suzuki motor cycle which was used for the crime, according to alleged confessional statement it was a black Ind-Suzuki motor cycle. The court has erroneously ignored the colour of the motor cycle by saying that it is not a material contradiction. To quote from the judgement of the designated judge—

"Now there is a second contradiction in respect of the colour of the motor cycle. In the P.I.R. the colour of the motor cycle is mentioned as black. While giving the evidence before me on oath this witness stated that the said motorcycle was of red colour. The presence of the cyclist cannot be disputed because it

is on account of his cycle that the motor car of Gen. A.S. Vaidya had to stop. Bhanumati Vaidya was indisputably accompanying the deceased and she was sitting in the front side. She had the full scope to see what kind of colour the said motor-cycle was. Both of them in their evidence have stated that the said motor cycle was of a red colour. Now this witness is also stating before the court that it was of red colour. Certainly, looking to the contents of the P.I.R. to the effect that the said motor-cycle was of a black colour, it can be said that it is an improvement on the part of Ramchandra Kshirsagar complainant".

There is admittedly another contradiction in the statement of the complainant about his jumping out of the car. The quote from the judgement:

"According to this witness he got out of the car after the

car was stopped on account of the obstruction by the cycle. However, the contradiction from the complaint has been taken out from his mouth to the effect that he got out of the car by opening the door when the car dashed against the cyclist but before the car went out of the road on kachha road. In my opinion this contradiction is not material in view of the fact that after all it is an established fact that the car did stop on account of the obstruction by the cycle of Digambar Gailwad".

Therefore, in such cases where there are doubtful circumstances, however, insignificant they appear to be, miscarriage of Justice through Judicial error, however minimal may be, cannot be ruled out and so the Bar and the Bench must professionally purge themselves of the blood on the seal of justice. We must remember that capital punishment eliminates the accused and thereby it also

eliminates the chance of correcting judicial errors imposed on the innocent. In case of Sukha and Jinda, the original case was registered against five accused, out of the five three accused were acquitted as there was no evidence against them. Yadwinder Soren and Avtar Singh accused were discharged and acquitted during the course of trial on 17-5-69 under section 300 (1) Criminal Procedure Code while Nima was acquitted by the designated judge in his final judgement on 21.10.89. Confession may be relevant for conviction but not for quantum of sentence.

The most serious charge against the death penalty is that it is irreversible and an innocent person can die. Even if the state has a right to employ capital punishment, the state should not exercise that right because more humane methods of defending the society exist and should be used. But the judgement in the case of Sukha and Jinda ignores the cardinal principle of law that doubt should

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always be resolved on the side of life. For example there was an identification parade arranged for the accused persons, Ramchandra Kishanagar the security guard accompanying Gen. A.S. Vaidya at the time of his murder, had identified the accused in this identification parade. He stated in his statement in court that except Sukhdev Singh accused none of the participants in the parade was wearing red Lungi. If that is taken as correct then the entire identification parade becomes a farce because the accused could easily be singled out and identified because of his red Lungi. The designated judge dealing with this aspect of the matter writes:

"The argument has lost force because Sukhdev Singh accused himself admitted before me on 19th September 1988 that he wanted to plead guilty in Vaidya's case, and that he did not want to fight this case. Not only this, but in clear words, he stated, *Maitre Vaidya Sahib Ko Mura Hai*.

Thereafter, I gave time to him for reflection till 26th September, 1988. This statement was made by him after 15 days of framing the charge on 2nd September, 1988. So whether he was in red Lungi or whether he was in Lungi or whether he was in which dress, is no matter of importance before me."

Belief that death sentence has a deterrent effect which would not result from imprisonment or other forms of punishment has no relevance in the case of Sukha and Jinda. They are not afraid of death is evident from their statements in the court. Jinda in his statement in court had asserted "We Sikhs are not afraid of death". He had decided:

"We are fighting for the separate State of Khalistan. We are fighting with the Union Government for this purpose. We Sikhs are not afraid of death. We will be fighting until we achieve the target of separate Khalistan. We are fighting against the atrocities committed by Government of India against our community in Punjab. We killed Mr. A.S. Vaidya because he attacked our Golden Temple of Amritsar and destroyed our Akal Takht which is very much religious to us and in Operation Blue Star which took place in June 1984, headed by General A.S. Vaidya, Akal Takht was completely destroyed. Therefore, we are very much enraged, innocent, old, young, small persons were crushed in Operation Blue Star. We are prepared to sacrifice thousands of lives

of our Sikh Community for this cause. *Khalistan Zindabad*."

Hanging of Sukha and Jinda will not heal the wounds inflicted on Sikh psyche by Operation Blue Star. We should look upon crime as a disease. Evil should be treated in charity instead of anger. The change will be simple and sublime. If every soul has a part every sinner has a future and it is the rule of law to remind both of this. Arthur Koestler rightly says:

"The gallows is not only a machine of death but a symbol. It is the symbol of terror, cruelty and irreverence for life, the common denominator of primitive savagery, medieval fanaticism and modern totalitarianism. It stands for everything that mankind must reject, if mankind is to survive its present crisis."

Sukha and Jinda had stated before the court that they killed General A.S. Vaidya because he was the Army General in-charge who carried out the Operation Blue Star in which their most pious Akal Takht was destroyed. Thus Sukha and Jinda killed Vaidya not for any personal gain or because of personal animosity. The causes were much deeper, touching the psyche of Sikh masses and this psyche needs a healing touch and not another knife thrust. Their hanging is not going to deter other Sikh youth from embracing the bellow of martyrdom as is evident from the statement of Sukha and Jinda in the court on the point of sentence. When the court asked them what they have to say on the point of sentence to be pronounced against them, the two had replied that they are ready for sacrifice. To quote from the Judgment:

"The accused have expressed the desire to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the separate State of Khalistan. It means they have no regard for their own nation."

Both these brave men, in consonance with Sikh traditions replete with instances of a determined will to die gallantly for a cause dear to their hearts, have even refused to appeal against their sentences or even send a mercy petition to the President of India. In the eyes of all devout Sikhs, Sukha and Jinda only administered the divine retribution on General A.S. Vaidya for destroying the pious Akal Takht. In such a situation the speech of Subhas Chandra Bose at Azad Maidan in Delhi at time of execution of Shaheed-Azam Bhagat Singh is relevant. To quote—

"The whole of India knows by this time that Bhagat Singh

and his comrades, Rajguru and Sukhdev are going to be executed before long. I must say that the news came as a terrible shock to me when I alighted at Delhi station yesterday noon. There is not the slightest doubt that the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades on the eve of the Karachi Congress will profoundly disturb the political atmosphere in India. We demand with one voice and one will that the death sentences on Bhagat Singh and his comrades be at once commuted. Bhagat Singh is today not a person but a symbol. He symbolises the spirit of revolt which is abroad in the country. We may condemn his methods, but we cannot ignore his selflessness."

Citing the instance of Mr. MacSwiney the Lord Mayor of Cork, who had gone on hunger strike in jail and whom the Government would not release despite the appeal of the people, and that of Scott Macdonald who had been sentenced to death and whom the Government released some time later in order the Irish Question would begin in an atmosphere of peace and goodwill, Mr. Bose had warned the government that it was not acting up to the spirit underlying the truce and that it was undoing to the very great extent the atmosphere of goodwill which Mahatma had been able to bring about:

Even Mahatma Gandhi, in a letter to the Viceroy had pleaded for commutation of death sentence of Bhagat Singh and his associates by arguing—

"Popular opinion rightly or wrongly demands commutation."

When there is no principle at stake, it is often a duty to respect it.

Political murders have been condoned before now. It is worthwhile saving lives, if thereby many other innocent lives are likely to be saved and may be even revolutionary crime almost stamped out.

Execution is an irrevocable act. If you think that there is the slightest chance of error of judgement, I would urge you to suspend for further review an act that is beyond recall."

British government had commuted the sentences of the Indian National Army personnel who had revolted against the government of the day and killed hundreds of soldiers of the British Army. Mr. Bhikhabhai Desai arguing on behalf of I.N.A. officers had said:

"A nation or a part of a nation does reach a stage where it is entitled to wage war for its liberation and acts done by persons acting as a part of a nation which was fighting for its liberation would be immune by reason of International Law, from being an offence under the Municipal Law of the Country."

Lord Auchinleck, then the Commander-in-Chief, in his report to the Viceroy, had recommended the remission of sentences imposed on the I.N.A. officers on the ground that the accused might have acted in good faith, however wrong they may have been by our standards in forsaking their original allegiance. It is quite obvious that this is the general opinion held in India, not only by the public but by a considerable part of the Indian Army as well. I believe that to confirm the sentence of transportation on these two officers would have the effect of making them into martyrs and intensifying the political campaign of bitterness and racial animosity."

If the government wants to solve the Sikh problem by applying balm to the wounded Sikh psyche, here is an opportunity to do so. No doubt Sukha and Jinda have no regrets for what they have done by taking revenge for destruction of their shrine. But we should not be guided by who is right but by what is right. Homicide is heinous; so is hanging. Can two wrongs make one right.

The United Nations Committee that studied capital punishment had reported that the data which now exist show no correlation between the existence of capital punishment. Death is not so terrifying that some people will not volunteer for it if the self respect and dignity of their community is hurt.

The words of Smt. Nigami, who had sought the abolition of death penalty, in the Indian Parliament, are relevant even today. She had said:

"I want to submit that if you want to keep our pledge of non-violence then this violence which is constantly done by the State, in the name of keeping the people safe and so on, which is entirely wrong and which I have proved by so many instances has no different effect on people's psychology and which really never gives any security to the people, must be stopped."

We have before us a challenge to change, an opportunity to reform and an invitation to enlightenment.

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It will be interesting to know that the former head of history department and an eminent scholar, Dr. V.S. Bhatnagar, has written to the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Rameshwar Sharma, asking him to revoke the Council's decision, as it virtually amounts to stifling the freedom of speech and expression. A historian, while giving the facts of the events, also examines probabilities and that is what Dr. Sharma has done.

The said remarks of the history should not be taken as an attempt to denigrate the personality of Pratap, in a bid to glorify Akbar. There is nothing to glorify any of the Mughal kings, as Mughals were foreign invaders and their acts of cruelty have been written in our history with the blood of number of Indians who fought for the unity and freedom of India.

Let us refresh our memory of our history of sixteenth century when on the eve of Babur's invasion, Guru Nanak the first revolutionary saint of the Bhakti movement gave us slogan of unity and freedom of "Hindustan" (India). Again, the martyrs of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur the fifth and ninth Gurus of the Sikhs are living examples of the naked tyranny of the Mughal not only that Zorawar Singh aged nine and Feroz aged seven, younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, were killed in 1705 by Wazir Khan, Governor of Sirhind, during Mughal rule. These are the few examples of brutality and tyranny of the Mughals and Akbar was one of those Mughals. A true and devoted Indian dare not glorify a foreign invader, may he be a Mughal king or a British ruler.

It is pity that a handful of politicians are glorifying Akbar on the plea that he pursued a peaceful religious policy and married a Rajput Princess—Jodha Bai, sister of Raja Man Singh. As a shrewd ruler, Akbar could not afford to ignore the rising power of the Rajputs and the Marathas. Had he been a true national leader, he would have given a Rajput name to his son Prince Salim (Jahangir). Not only, Akbar tried to please Rajputs by giving prestigious posts in his army to the top Rajputs. But in the background he continued practising Muslim culture during his rule. As soon as, Jahangir took power, he reversed the clock. The new religious Dine-Fahi also died with Akbar's death.

Dirty politics has entered into the administration and the results of our plans and policies are before us. Except inefficient and dishonest administration, we have achieved nothing noteworthy during the past 45 years. The results of interference of politics in the field of sports are shameful and disgraceful. A country, with

a population of over 65 crores could not even get a bronze medal. An example of politics in sports—the list of Indian officials was full of "Bengali Mafia".

It is high time that the government should start governing. Sports and Education must be freed of politicians and official clutches. Let every Indian enjoy the fragrance of freedom. A common man does not enjoy freedom in our country. Our freedom is in peril. Let us not beat about the bush.

Avtar Singh

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## ASIA WATCH STUDIES PUNJAB VIOLENCE

A large number of well documented cases of alleged human rights violations at the hands of both the security forces and militant groups were brought to the notice of a two-member team of Asia Watch, an internationally recognised human rights organisation, during its recent visit to the troubled state.

The team consisting of Patricia A. Gossman, Research Associate, and Vincent Iacopino, physician for Asia Watch, visited Amritsar border district from October 11 to 14 after touring Ropar, Patiala, Sangrur and Ludhiana districts of Malwa region. The visit was kept a closely guarded secret. Many individuals and certain human rights organisations of their activists were called on and some of the even assisted the team to study the alleged human rights violations.

While quoting instances certain Sikh organisations alleged that the security forces had adopted increasingly brutal methods in the name of combating militancy, with alleged arbitrary arrest, torture, prolonged detention without trial, disappearances and summary killings of Sikh youths in fake encounters, certain government agencies and Leftist leaders brought the cases of killings of innocent civilians, including government officials, policemen, families of policemen and others.

During the visit to Amritsar district, the Asia Watch team visited Boparai Basinghwalla and Khula Khurd villages to study the killing of families of two policemen and Behla village to study the infamous Behla encounter where the police allegedly used seven innocent civilians as "human shields".

Students of Guru Nanak Dev University brought the matter of Mr Parm Satinder Singh, a student of B. Tech., who was allegedly picked up by the police from Lawrence Road, Amritsar on May 18 and whose fate was still unknown. Few residents of Jeobala village under Tarn Taran police district met them to bring to their notice the disappearance of Mr Gurdeep Singh, who was

picked up by the police more than two months ago.

Mrs Kashmir Kaur, a dismissed constable of Majitha police district, brought the issue of disappearance of her husband, an A.S.I., who was also dismissed on the same day, from police custody in mysterious circumstances from the local Ram Bagh station in February, 1991.

Certain individuals from Gurdaspur also met the visiting team.

The Asia Watch team visited this strife-ridden state in December, 1991, last time and released its 210-page report titled "Punjab in crisis" recently.

## Dr. Kirpal Singh Honoured

Dr Kirpal Singh former Professor and Head Department of Punjab Historical Studies Panjab University, Patiala, has been selected by the Asiatic Society Calcutta as a member of the Governing Council of the Society.

It may be noted that Asiatic Society Calcutta is the oldest learned institute in India. It was founded by Sir William Jones, the pioneering Orientalist in 1784 A.D. during the rule of Warren Hastings. During the span of two centuries it has collected thousands of manuscripts in Pali, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and other Indian languages. It has got one of the biggest libraries in India. Its publication section is the oldest and has published very rare manuscripts in Sanskrit and

Persian. Several research monographs have been edited and published.

Its journal entitled "Journal of Asiatic Society" is the prestigious and premier research journal in the country. Keeping in view its wide range research in the Oriental languages, literature, natural sciences, history, culture and our vast heritage, the Indian government passed in the parliament an Act entitled Asiatic Society Act in 1984 declaring Asiatic Society to be an institute of national importance.

Dr. Kirpal Singh has been life member of the Asiatic Society Calcutta since early sixties. On this basis he was recommended and accepted member of Royal Asiatic Society London in 1964.

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## K.S. Grewal Honoured

While celebrating the Vishwakarma Day this year at Lal Bahadur Shastri Auditorium, Lajpat Nagar, New Delhi, the Vishwakarma Shilpi Sabha (Regd.), New Delhi honoured six personalities with "Vishwakarma Trophy" for their commendable works in various fields.

They are Mrs R.P.L. Verma (Social Work); Mr M.S. Saggi (Architectural); Mr K.S. Grewal (Literature and for the cause of national integration, communal harmony and peace); Mr I.D. Sethi (Technical); Mr J.S. Walia of London (International Understanding); and Mr K.N. Lamba (Public Relations).

Sardar Kirpal Singh Bangatpuri, President, Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee was the chief guest on the occasion where elite of Delhi was present. The Kavi Darbar was also arranged on the occasion.

## SIKH MOCKED AT

(Continued from page 4)

Injuring the religious sentiments of a community is a cognizable offence. But, apparently, Mr Bhajan Lal has different views.

Another instance has come from Rajasthan where the BJP ministry is at helm of affairs. In a book prescribed for sixth class of state schools, there is a chapter on Sikhs in which it is said that "Sikhs lose their head and sense of proportion at the stroke of 12 noon". This sordid joke, let us admit, is being buried at Sikhs by people for reasons known to them. But its inclusion in a school textbook is the limit. This proves that the BJP government is out to malign Sikhs and sow prejudice in the minds of the students against them. It is all the more odd when BJP sometimes tries to woo Sikhs into their political fold and makes loud announcements that Sikhs are just a branch of the big Hindu tree. A case of double-speak and double-thinking.

## For Sikh Religious Literature

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Keeping in view the demand of Sikh Sangat, DGPC has made arrangements to make available "Sundar Gutha", and the four volume "Shabadarta" at DGPC Dharmik Pustak Bhandar at Gurdwara Sagar and Gurdwara Bangla Sahib.

Subscription charges for the "Sis Gurm" monthly can also be deposited at these centres.

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